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#3, 1970 VOLUME XXXVII, NUMBER 3

CONTENTS

COVER
Davis Herron 329

ARTICLES
The Art of Suicide
A. Alvarez 339

Language and Politics
Leo Bersani 385

Panthers at Yale
Peter Brooks 420

Report From Three Feet Under
Robin Magowan 447

POEMS
Seven Ghazals
Jim Harrison 378

STORIES
Owen's Father
L. Woiwode 359

Five Pieces
W.S. Merwin 409

PHOTOGRAPHS
The Lost Shoe
Duane Michals 441

VARIETY
Handbook for the Seventies
Jan Herman 451

CONTEMPORARY NONSENSE 454

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NOTES

A. ALVAREZ's most recent book is Beyond All This Fiddle. "The Art of Suicide" is from a work in progress, **The Savage God: A Study of Suicide**, to be published by Random House in 1971. An extended version of the essay will also appear in **Handbook for the Study of Suicide**, edited by S. Perlin. . . . **L. WOIWODE's** book **What I'm Going to Do, I Think** was the recipient this spring of the William Faulkner Award "for the most notable and distinguished first novel of 1969." Mr. Woiwode has been traveling around the U.S. for two years, trying, he tells us, "to find a place quiet enough to work with some permanence." . . . "The Seven Ghazals" are from **JIM HARRISON's** third collection of poetry, **Outlyer**, forthcoming from Simon and Schuster in January. Mr. Harrison has also completed an untitled false memoir, due out next year, and is co-editor of **Sumac**, which he describes as "an eclectic triquarterly." He is thirty-two and promises "a predictable ode will be written on reaching thirty-three". . . . This fall Oxford is publishing **LEO BERSANI's** new book, **Balzac to Beckett: Center and Circumference in French Fiction.** Mr. Bersani teaches French at Rutgers. . . . The selections by **W. S. MERWIN** are included in his book,

(*Continued on Page 456*)

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YOU DID IT!

The Grape Boycott is Over

But the farm workers' bitter struggle still goes on.

In August of 1970, nearly 6,000 of the 7,000 lettuce workers in Salinas, California, under the leadership of Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, went on strike. The strike was the most effective in history. Lettuce shipments dropped from 350 to 35 boxcars a day!

But in the third week of the strike, Judge Anthony Brazil (who helped destroy the Salinas lettuce strike of 1936) issued a far-reaching, vicious injunction prohibiting picketing and communication with strikebreakers.

As the volume of lettuce shipments has begun to climb, the strategy has once more shifted to boycott. One company (the Interharvest Company) has signed a contract. UFWOC's Union Label (the black eagle) appears on wrapped lettuce bearing Interharvest's "Chiquita" and "Amigo" labels.

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A. Alvarez

THE ART OF SUICIDE

After Stephane Mallarmé, after Paul Verlaine, after Gustave Moreau, after Puvis de Chavannes, after our own verse, after all our subtle colour and nervous rhythm, after the faint mixed tints of Conder, what more is possible? After us the Savage God.
—W. B. YEATS, *The Trembling of the Veil.*

To put it most simply: one of the most remarkable features of the arts in this century has been the sudden, sharp rise in the casualty rate among the artists. Of the great premodernists, Rimbaud abandoned poetry at the age of twenty, Van Gogh killed himself, Strindberg went mad. Since then the toll has mounted steadily: in the first great flowering of modernism, Kafka wanted to turn his premature natural death from tuberculosis into artistic suicide by having all his writings destroyed. Virginia Woolfe drowned herself, a victim of her own excessive sensitivity. Hart Crane devoted prodigious energy to aestheticizing his chaotic life — a desperate compound of homosexuality and alcoholism — and finally, thinking himself a failure, jumped overboard from a steamer in the Caribbean. Dylan Thomas and Brendan Behan drank themselves to death. Artaud spent years in lunatic asylums. Delmore Schwartz was found dead in a run-down Manhattan hotel. Camus died absurdly in a car crash. Cesare Pavese and Paul Celan, Randall Jarrell and Sylvia Plath,

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Mayakovsky, Yesenin and Tsvetayeva killed themselves. Among the painters, the suicides include Modigliani, Arshile Gorki, Mark Gertler, Jackson Pollack and Mark Rothko. Spanning the generations was Hemingway, whose prose was modeled on a kind of physical ethic of courage and the control necessary at the limits of endurance. He stripped his style to the bone in order to achieve the aesthetic corollary of physical grace — a matter of great economy, great precision, great tension under the appearance of ease. In such a perspective, the natural erosions of age — weakness, uncertainty, clumsiness, imprecision, an overall slackening of what had once been a highly tuned machine — would have seemed as unbearable as losing the ability to write. In the end, he followed the example of his father and shot himself.

Each of these deaths has its own inner logic and unrepeatable despair, and to do them justice would require a degree of detail beyond my purposes here. But a simple point emerges: before the twentieth century it is possible to discuss cases individually, since the artists who killed themselves or were even seriously suicidal were rare exceptions. In the twentieth century the balance suddenly shifts: the better the artist the more vulnerable he seems to be. Obviously, this is in no way a firm rule. The Grand Old Men of literature have been both numerous and very grand: Eliot, Joyce, Pound, Mann, Forster, Frost, Stevens, Marianne Moore. Even so, the casualty rate among the gifted seems out of all proportion, as though the nature of the artistic undertaking itself and the demands it makes had altered radically.

There are, I think, a number of reasons. The first is the continuous, restless urge to experiment, the constant need to change, to innovate, to destroy the accepted styles. "If it works," says Marshall McLuhan, "it's obsolete." But experiment has a logic of its own which leads it unceasingly away from questions of formal technique into a realm where the role of the artist himself alters. Since art changes when the forms available are no longer adequate to what has to be expressed, it follows that every genuine technical revolution is parallel to a profound internal shift. (The superficial changes need not concern us since they are a matter merely of fashion, and, as such, are dictated not by any inner necessities but by the economics of the art industry and the demands of art consumers.) Thus for the

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Romantic poets, a major gesture of their new emotional freedom was to abandon the straitjacket of the classical rhymed couplet. Similarly, the first modernists jettisoned traditional rhymes and meters in favor of a free verse which would allow them to follow precisely and without deflection the movement of their sensibilities. Technical exploration, in short, implies a degree of psychic exploration; the more radical the experiments, the deeper the responses tapped. That, presumably, is why the urge to experiment faded in the nineteen-thirties when it seemed that left-wing politics should provide all the answers, and again in England in the nineteen-fifties when the Movement poets were busy immortalizing the securities and complacencies of the commuter suburbs. Not that an experimental, avant-garde appearance guarantees anything; it can be as easily assumed as any other fancy dress and, more easily than most, becomes an embarrassment to the timid and conventional, since its see-through design effortlessly reveals the user's lack of originality: witness the drab followers of Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams, on both sides of the Atlantic.

But for the more serious artists experiment has not been a matter of merely tinkering with the machinery. Instead, it has provided a context in which he explores the perennial question, "What am I?" without benefit of moral, cultural or even technical securities. Since part of his gift is also a weird knack of sensing and expressing the strains of his time in advance of other people, the movement of the modern arts has been, with continual minor diversions, toward a progressively more inward response to a progressively more intolerable sense of disaster. It is as though, by taking to its limits Conrad's dictum "In the destructive element immerse," his whole role in society had changed; instead of being a Romantic hero and liberator, he has become a victim, a scapegoat.

One of the most beautiful, and certainly the saddest statement of this new fate is by Wilfred Owen, who was dead before the great Modernist change had properly begun. On New Year's Eve, 1917/18, he wrote to his mother:

> I am not dissatisfied with my years. Everything has been done in bouts:
>
> Bouts of awful labour at Shrewsbury and Bordeaux; bouts of amazing pleasure in the Pyrenees, and play at Craiglockhart; bouts

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> of religion at Dunsden; bouts of horrible danger on the Somme; bouts of poetry always; of your affection always; of sympathy for the oppressed always.
>
> I go out of this year a Poet, my dear Mother, as which I did not enter it. I am held peer by the Georgians; I am a poet's poet.
>
> I am started. The tugs have left me; I feel the great swelling of the open sea taking my galleon.
>
> Last year, at this time, (it is just midnight, and now is the intolerable instant of the Change) last year I lay awake in a windy tent in the middle of a vast, dreadful encampment. It seemed neither France nor England, but a kind of paddock where the beasts are kept a few days before the shambles. I heard the revelling of the Scotch troops, who are now dead, and who knew they would be dead. I thought of this present night, and whether I should indeed — whether we should indeed — whether you would indeed — but I thought neither long nor deeply, for I am a master of elision.
>
> But chiefly I thought of the very strange look on all the faces in that camp; an incomprenhensible look, which a man will never see in England, though wars should be in England; nor can it be seen in any battle. But only in Etaples.
>
> It was not despair, or terror, it was more terrible than terror, for it was a blindfold look, and without expression, like a dead rabbit's.
>
> It will never be painted, and no actor will ever seize it. And to describe it, I think I must go back and be with them.

Nine months later Owen was back in France. Two months after that he was killed in action, exactly one week before the war ended.

There are two forces at work in this letter, each pulling in the opposite direction: nurture and nature, training and instinct or, in Eliot's phrase, "tradition and the individual talent." Both are personal yet both also correspond to vital elements in his poetry. The first is traditional, which is inevitable since Owen was, in many ways, still at one with the comfortable Georgians who had no truck with the poetic changes already beginning around them. As such, he was responding in the heroic tradition of Sir Philip Sidney and, say, Captain Oates, as "a brave man and an English gentleman." He was going back to France because he had to do his duty as a soldier; since duty invariably means sacrifice, even the chance of the ultimate sacrifice must be accepted without fuss.

But even more strongly, there is an antiheroic force at work which corresponds to all those elements in his writing which went to make him one of the British forerunners of modernism; it corre-

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sponds, that is, to his poems' harsh, disabused vision of the war and, technically, to their subtle, decisive use of half-rhymes which helped effectively to dispose of the chiming sweetness of much Georgian verse. It was this second force which impelled him to return to France not as "an officer and a gentleman" but as a writer. The letter is, after all, about his coming-of-age as a poet, and it was in the context of this newly matured power that he made his decision to return to the front. It seems, literally, to have been a decision: he had already seen a great deal of active service and, as a result, had been hospitalized with shellshock. Moreover, his poetry had brought him powerful friends, one of whom, Proust's translator Scott Moncrieff, worked in the War Office and had been using his influence to get Owen a safe posting in England. It may, then, have taken as much effort and organization to return to the fighting as to stay away. What drew him back, I think, had nothing to do with heroism and everything to do with poetry. The new powers he felt in himself seem to have been inextricably linked with the strange, unprecedented vision he had had in France:

> But chiefly I thought of the very strange look on all the faces in that camp; an incomprehensible look, which a man will never see in England, though wars should be in England; nor can it be seen in any battle. But only in Etaples.
>
> It was not despair, or terror, it was more terrible than terror, for it was a blindfold look, and without expression, like a dead rabbit's.
>
> It will never be painted, and no actor will ever seize it. And to describe it, I think I must go back and be with them.

That numbness — beyond hope, despair, terror and, certainly, beyond heroics — is, I think, the final quantum to which all the modish forms of twentieth-century alienation are reduced. Under the energy, appetite and constant diversity of the modern arts is this obdurate core of blankness and insentience which no amount of creative optimism and effort can wholly break down or remove. It is like, for a believer, the final, unbudgeable illumination that God is not good. A psychiatrist has defined it, in more contemporary terms, as that "psychic numbing" which occurs in an overwhelming encounter with death.[1] That is, when death is everywhere and on such a vast scale

[1] Robert Jay Lifton. *Death in Life: The Survivors of Hiroshima.*

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that it becomes indifferent, impersonal, inevitable and, finally, without meaning, the only way to survive, however briefly, is by shutting oneself off utterly from every feeling, so that one becomes invulnerable, not like an armored animal but like a stone.

> . . . [P]sychic closing-off can serve a highly adaptive function. It does so partly through a process of denial ("If I feel nothing, then death is not taking place") . . . . Further, it protects the survivor from a sense of complete helplessness, from feeling himself totally inactivated by the force invading his environment. By closing himself off, he resists being "acted upon" or altered . . . . We may thus say that the survivor initially undergoes a radical but temporary diminution of his sense of actuality in order to avoid losing this sense completely and permanently; he undergoes a reversible form of symbolic death in order to avoid a permanent physical or psychic death.

Dr. Lifton is, as it happens, describing the defense mechanisms brought into play by the survivors of the Hiroshima atom bomb and the Nazi concentration camps. But that awareness of a ubiquitous, arbitrary death — which descends like a medieval plague on the just and unjust alike, without warning or reason — is, I think, central to our experience of the twentieth century. It began with the pointless slaughters of the First World War, continued through Nazi and Stalinist extermination camps, through a Second World War which culminated in two atomic explosions, and has survived with genocide in Tibet and Biafra, a senseless war in Vietnam, atomic testing which poisons the atmosphere and the development of biological weapons which kill haphazardly and more or less without control; it ends with the possibility of the globe itself shadowed by nuclear weapons orbiting in outer space.

It is important not to exaggerate; after all, this sense of disaster is, for the moment, mercifully peripheral to the lives most of us lead. To harp on it like Cassandra is as foolish, and ultimately as boring, as to ignore it completely. Yet the fact remains that the context in which our arts, morals and securities are created has changed radically:

> After Hiroshima we can envisage no war-linked chivalry, certainly no glory. Indeed, we can see no relationship — not even a distinction — between victimizer and victim — only the sharing in species annihilation. . . . In every age man faces a pervasive theme which defies his engagement and yet must be engaged. In Freud's day it was sexuality and moralism. Now it is unlimited technological violence and absurd death. [—*Dr. Lifton*]

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In other words, that sense of chaos which, I suggested, is the driving force behind the restless experimentalism of the twentieth-century arts has two sources — one developing directly from the period before 1914, the other emerging for the first time during the First World War and growing increasingly stronger and more unavoidable as the century has gone on. Both, perhaps, are consequences of industrialism: the first is connected with the destruction of the old social relationships and the related structures of belief during the Industrial Revolution; the second is produced by the technology itself which, in the process of creating the wherewithal to make life easier than ever before, has perfected, as a kind of lunatic spin-off, instruments to destroy life completely. More simply, just as the decay of religious authority in the nineteenth century made life seem absurd by depriving it of any ultimate coherence, so the growth of modern technology has made death itself absurd by reducing it to a random happening totally unconnected with the inner rhythms and logic of the lives destroyed.

This, then, is the Savage God whom Yeats foresaw and whose intolerable, demanding presence Wilfred Owen sensed at the front. To be true to his vocation as a poet Owen felt he must describe that "blindfold look, and without expression, like a dead rabbit's"; which meant he had to return to France and risk his life. This double duty — to forge a language which will somehow absolve or validate absurd death, and to accept the existential risks involved in doing so — is, I think, the model for everything that was to follow. "There exist no words, in any human language," wrote a Hiroshima survivor, "which can comfort guinea pigs who do not know the cause of their death." It is precisely the pressure to discover a language adequate to this apparently impossible task which is behind the curious sense of strain characteristic of nearly all the best and most ambitious work of this century.

There are, of course, other, more obvious pressures, some of which I have already touched on: the collapse of traditional values, impatience with worn-out conventions, the minor pleasures of iconoclasm and experiment for their own sakes. There is also the impact of what Marshall McLuhan calls the "electronic culture," which has so effortlessly usurped both the audience and many of the functions of the "formal" highbrow arts. But beyond all these, and becoming continually more insistent as the atrocities have grown in size and frequency, has been the absolute need to find an artistic language

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with which to grasp in the imagination the historical facts of this century; a language, that is, for "the destructive element," the dimension of unnatural, premature death.

Inevitably, it is the language of mourning. Or rather, the arts take on the function of mourning, breaking down that "psychic numbness" which follows any massive immersion in death: "The books we need," wrote Kafka in a letter to his friend Oscar Pollack, "are the kind that act upon us like a misfortune, that make us suffer like the death of someone we love more than ourselves, that make us feel as though we were on the verge of suicide, or lost in a forest remote from all human habitation — a book should serve as the axe for the frozen sea within us." Clearly, books of this order will not be written simply by invoking the atrocities — a gesture which usually guarantees nothing but rhetoric and the cheapening of all those millions of deaths. What is required is something a good deal more difficult and individual: the creative act itself, which gives shape, coherence and some kind of gratuitous beauty to all those vague depressions and paranoias art is heir to. Freud responded to the First World War by positing a death instinct beyond the pleasure principle; for the artist, the problem is to create a language which is both beyond the pleasure principle and, at the same time, pleasurable.

This ultimately is the pressure forcing the artist into the role of scapegoat. In order to evolve a language of mourning which will release all those backed-up guilts and obscure hostilities he shares with his audience, he puts himself at risk and explores his own vulnerability; it is as though he were testing out his own death in his imagination — symbolically, tentatively and with every escape hatch open. "Suicide," said Camus, "is prepared within the silence of the heart, as is a great work of art." Increasingly, the corollary also seems to be true: under certain conditions of stress, a great work of art *is* a kind of suicide.

There are two opposite ways into this dimension of death. The first is through what might be called Totalitarian Art (which is, incidentally, different in kind from traditional art in a totalitarian society). It tackles the historical situation frontally, more or less brutally, in order to create a human perspective for a dehumanizing process. The second is what I have called elsewhere Extremist Art: the

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destruction is all turned inwards and the artist deliberately explores in himself that narrow, violent area between the viable and the impossible, the tolerable and the intolerable. Both approaches involve certain radical changes in the relationship of the artist to his material.

For Totalitarian Art the changes are both inevitable and unwilling. The simple reason is that a police state and its politics of terror produce conditions in which the intense individualism on which art is traditionally based — its absolute trust in the validity of the unique personal insight — is no longer possible. When the artist is valued like an engineer or factory worker or bureaucrat, only to the extent to which he serves the policies of the state, then his art is reduced to propaganda — sometimes sophisticated, more often not. The artist who refuses that role refuses everything; he becomes superfluous. In these circumstances the price of art in the traditional sense and with its traditional values is suicide — or silence, which amounts to the same thing.

Perhaps this explains the phenomenal casualty rate among the generation of Russian poets who had begun to work before the convulsions of 1917 and refused the Joycean alternative of "silence, exile and cunning." In 1926, after Sergei Yesenin hanged himself, first cutting his wrists and then, as a last great aesthetic gesture, writing a farewell poem in his own blood, Mayakovsky wrote, condemning him:

In this life it is not difficult to die
it is more difficult to live.

Yet less than five years later Mayakovsky himself, poetic hero of the Revolution and inveterate gambler who had twice already played Russian roulette with a loaded revolver, came to the conclusion that his political principles were poisoning his poetry at its source. He played Russian roulette for the last time and lost. In his suicide note he wrote laconically, "I don't recommend it for others." Yet several others did, in fact, follow him, apart from all those who, like Mandelshtam and Babel, disappeared in the purges. Boris Pasternak wrote an epitaph on them all:

> To start with what is most important: we have no conception of the inner torture which precedes suicide. People who are physically tortured on the rack keep losing consciousness, their suffering is so great that its unendurable intensity shortens the end. But a man

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who is thus at the mercy of the executioner is not annihilated when he faints from pain, for he is present at his own end, his past belongs to him, his memories are his and, if he chooses, he can make use of them, they can help him before his death.

But a man who decides to commit suicide puts a full stop to his being, he turns his back on his past, he declares himself a bankrupt and his memories to be unreal. They can no longer help or save him, he has put himself beyond their reach. The continuity of his inner life is broken, his personality is at an end. And perhaps what finally makes him kill himself is not the firmness of his resolve but the unbearable quality of this anguish which belongs to no one, of this suffering in the absence of the sufferer, of this waiting which is empty because life has stopped and can no longer fill it.

It seems to me that Mayakovsky shot himself out of pride, because he condemned something in himself, or close to him, to which his self-respect could not submit. That Yesenin hanged himself without having properly thought out the consequences of his act, still saying in his inmost heart: "Who knows? Perhaps this isn't yet the end. Nothing is yet decided." That Maria Tsvetayeva had always held her work between herself and the reality of daily life; and when she found this luxury beyond her means, when she felt that for her son's sake she must, for a time, give up her passionate absorption in poetry and look round her soberly, she saw chaos, no longer screened by art, fixed, unfamiliar, motionless, and, not knowing where to run for terror, she hid in death, putting her head into the noose as she might have hidden her head under her pillow. It seems to me that Paolo Yashvili was utterly confused, spellbound by the Shigalyovshchina of 1937 as by witchcraft; and that he watched his daughter as she slept at night and, imagining himself unworthy to look at her, went out in the morning to his friends' house and blasted his head with grapeshot from his double-barrelled gun. And it seems to me that Fadeyev, still with the apologetic smile which had somehow stayed with him through all the crafty ins and outs of politics, told himself just before he pulled the trigger: "Well, now it's over. Goodbye, Sasha."

What is certain is that they all suffered beyond description, to the point where suffering has become a mental sickness. And, as we bow in homage to their gifts and to their bright memory, we should bow compassionately before their suffering.

Pasternak writes, I think, with the poignancy of a man who has been there himself. This is not, in any way, to imply that he had considered taking his own life — a question which is none of our business — but simply that he had endured those conditions in which suicide becomes an unavoidable fact of society. As he describes them,

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they are precisely the same as those which obtain, according to Hannah Arendt, when a totalitarian system achieves full power: like the victim of the totalitarian state, the suicide assists passively at the cancellation of his own history, his work, his memories, his whole inner life — in short, of everything that defines him as an individual:

> The concentration camps, by making death itself anonymous (making it impossible to find out whether a prisoner is dead or alive) robbed death of its meaning as the end of a fulfilled life. In a sense they took away the individual's own death, proving that henceforth nothing belonged to him and he belonged to no one. His death merely set a seal on the fact that he had never existed.

For both the exterminated millions Miss Arendt writes about and for Pasternak's suicides the conditions of terror were the same: "chaos, no longer screened by art, fixed, unfamiliar, motionless." But the suicides retained at least one last shred of freedom: they took their own lives. In part this is a political act, both a gesture of defiance and a condemnation of the set-up — like the self-immolation of the student, Jan Palach, in Prague in 1968. It is also an act of affirmation; the artist values life and his own truths too much to be able to tolerate their utter perversion. Thus the totalitarian state presents its artists with suicide as though with a gift, a final work of art validating all his others.

It was part of Pasternak's own genius and uniqueness that he refused to be canceled in this way and continued, by some political miracle, to write his poems and his novel as though all those improbable personal values still survived. No doubt he paid for his understanding with isolation and depression, but few others got out so cleanly. Yet neither those who survived contaminated nor those who went under ever managed to hold up the mirror to that complete corruption of nature which is the totalitarian system in action. Not necessarily for lack of trying. But despite the hundreds of attempts, police terror and the concentration camps have proved to be more or less impossible subjects for the artist; since what happened in them was beyond the imagination, it was therefore also beyond art and all those human values on which art is traditionally based.

The most powerful exception is the Pole, Tadeusz Borowski. Where the Russian poets to whom Pasternak paid his homage continued to write up to the point where they felt their whole life and

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work had been canceled by history, Borowski was unique in beginning with that cancellation. In one of his Auschwitz stories, "Nazis," he remarks sardonically:

> True, I could also lie, employing the age-old methods which literature has accustomed itself to using in pretending to express the truth — but I lack the imagination.

Lacking the imagination, he avoided all the tricks of melodrama, self-pity and propaganda which elsewhere are the conventional literary means of avoiding the intolerable facts of life in the camps. Instead, he perfected a curt, icy style, as stripped of feeling as of ornament, in which the monstrous lunacies of life in Auschwitz were allowed to speak for themselves, without comment and therefore without disguise:

> Between two throw-ins in a soccer game, right behind my back, three thousand people had been put to death.

Following an almost idyllic, almost pastoral description of a lazy game of football in a setting for the moment as peaceful as an English village cricket green, the sentence explodes like a bomb. Borowski's art was one of reduction; his prose and his stories are as bare and deprived as the lives described in them. A Polish critic has pointed out that his notion of tragedy "has nothing to do with the classical conception based on the necessity of choice between two systems of value. The hero of Borowski's stories is a hero *deprived of all choice.* He finds himself in a situation without choice because every choice is base." Because death in the ovens came to all, regardless of their innocence or their crimes, "the de-individualization of the hero was accompanied by a *de-individualization of the situation.*" Borowski himself called his stories "a journey to the utmost limit of a certain kind of morality." It is a morality created out of the absence of all morality, a skillful, minimal yet eloquent language for the most extreme form of what Lifton called "psychic numbing." By reducing his prose to the facts and images of camp life and refusing to intrude his own comments, Borowski also contrived to define, as though by his omissions and silences, precisely that state of mind in which the prisoners lived: brutal, depersonalized, rapacious, deadly. Morally speaking, it is a posthumous existence, like that of the suicide, as Pasternak described him, who "puts a full stop to

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his being . . . turns his back on his past, . . . declares himself a bankrupt and his memories to be unreal."

This, then, is Totalitarian Art; it is as much an art of successful suicide, as Extremist Art is that of the attempt. And in order to achieve it, Borowski himself underwent a progressive, triple suicide. Although he had behaved with great courage in Auschwitz, voluntarily giving up the relatively easy post of an orderly in order to share the lot of the common prisoners, his first person singular narrator is callous, corrupt, well-placed in the camp hierarchy, a survival artist who hates his fellow victims more than the guards because their weakness illuminates his, and each new death means a further effort of denial and a sharper guilt. Thus his first self–destruction was moral: he assuaged his guilt for surviving when so many others had gone under by identifying with the evil he described. The second suicide came after his concentration camps stories were written: he abandoned literature altogether and sank himself into Stalinist politics. Finally, having escaped the Zyklon B of Auschwitz for so long, he gassed himself at home in 1951, when he was twenty–seven years old.

The politicians and economists of disaster may talk glibly of "thinking about the unthinkable," but for the writers the problem is sharper, closer and considerably more difficult. Like the Hiroshima survivor I mentioned earlier, Borowski seems to have despaired of ever communicating adequately what he knew: "I wished to describe what I have experienced, but who in the world will believe a writer using an unknown language? It's like trying to persuade trees or stones." The key to the language turned out to be deprivation, a totalitarian art of facts and images, without frills or comments, as depersonalized and deprived as the lives of the victims themselves. In the same way, when Peter Weiss created his documentary tragedy, *The Investigation,* he invented nothing and added nothing; he simply used a blank stage, unnamed, anonymously dressed actors and skillfully edited fragments of the Auschwitz trials in Frankfurt. The result was a great deal more shocking than any "imaginative" re-creation of the camps could ever have been.

Similarly, Samuel Beckett began at the other end of the spectrum with an Irish genius for words, words, words and finished by creating a world of what Coleridge called "Life-in-Death." His people lead

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posthumous, immobile lives, stripped of all personal qualities, appetites, possessions and hope. All that remains to them is language; they palliate their present sterility by dim, ritual invocations of a time when things still happened and their motions still stirred. The fact that Beckett's detachment and impeccable timing produces comedy out of this universal impotence only serves, in the end, to make the desolation more complete. By refusing even the temptation to tragedy and by stylizing his language to the point of minimal survival, he makes his world impregnable. As a — presumably — lapsed Catholic he is creating a world which God has abandoned, as life might abandon some burnt-out star. To express this terminal morality he uses a minimal art, stripped of all artifact. It is the complement of Borowski's concentration camp stories, and equally deprived; the totalitarianism of the inner world.

It is here that Totalitarian and Extremist Art meet. When Norman Mailer calls the modern, statistical democracies of the West "totalitarian," he is not implying that the artist is bound and muzzled and circumscribed as he would be in a dictatorship — a vision not even the most strenuous paranoia could justify. But he is implying that mass democracy, mass morality and the mass media thrive independently of the individual, who joins them only at the cost of at least a partial perversion of his instincts and insights. He pays for his social ease with what used to be called his soul — his discriminations, his uniqueness, his psychic energy, his self. Add to that the ubiquitous sense of violence erupting continually at the edges of perception: local wars, riots, demonstrations and political assassinations, each seen, as it were, out of the corner of the eye as just another news feature on the television screen. Add, finally, the submerged but never quite avoidable knowledge of the possibility of ultimate violence, known hopefully as the balance of terror. The result is totalitarianism not as a political phenomenon but as a state of mind.

"To extreme sicknesses, extreme remedies," said Montaigne. In this instance the remedy has been an artistic revolution as radical and profound as that which took place after Wordsworth and Coleridge published the *Lyrical Ballads* or Eliot brought out *The Waste Land*. In a sense it completes the revolution which began with the first Romantics' insistence on the primacy of their subjective vision. The implied ideal of spontaneity was acceptable in principle but not

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wholly in practice since it seemed to deny what was self-evidently undeniable: the intelligence of the artist — his realistic understanding of the value and practical uses of his inspiration — and the whole drab, boring labor of creativity. Hence the excesses of Romanticism were continually counterbalanced by the criterion which Matthew Arnold, Flaubert, James, Eliot and Joyce made so much of: that of the artist as disembodied, utterly detached creator whose work is objective, autonymous, "containing in itself," in Coleridge's words, "the reason why it is so and not otherwise." These Arnoldian concepts acted as a substitute classicism which defended the best nineteenth- and twentieth-century artists against the weaknesses, conceit and often downright silliness inherent in their beliefs, from that split between feeling and intelligence which has bedeviled decadent Romanticism from Shelley to Ginsberg.

The opposite of all this is the post-Arnold, post-Eliot art we have now, where the work is not set off on its own, a law unto itself, but is, instead, in a continual, cross-fertilizing relationship with the artist's life. The existence of the work of art, that is, is contingent, provisional; it fixes the energy, appetites, moods and confusions of experience in the most lucid possible terms so as to create a temporary clearing of calm, and then moves on, or back, into autobiography. Camus first hinted at this in *The Myth of Sisyphus* when he suggested that a man's works "derive their definitive significance" only from his death: "They receive their most obvious light from the very life of their author. At the moment of death, the succession of his works is but a collection of failures. But if those failures all have the same resonance, the creator has managed to repeat the image of his own condition, to make the air echo with the sterile secret he possesses." This idea was taken up by the American poet, Hayden Carruth, and applied eloquently to the situation of the arts now:

> In its authenticity life is our own interpretation and re-organization of experience, structured metaphorically. It is the result of successive imaginative acts — it is a work of art! By conversion, a work of art is life, *provided it be true to the experiential core.* Thus in a century artists had moved from an Arnoldian criticism of life to an Existential creation of life, and both the gains and the losses were immense.
>
> The biggest loss perhaps was a large part of what we thought we had known about art. For now we saw in exactly what way art is limitless. It is limitless because it is free and responsible: it is a life.

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> Its only end is the adventitious cutting off that comes when a heart bursts, or a sun. Still, the individual "piece" of art must be objective in some sense; it lies on the page, on the canvas. Practically speaking, what is a limitless object? It is a fragment; a random fragment; a fragment without intrinsic form, shading off in all directions into whatever lies beyond. And this is what our art has become in the past two decades: random, fragmentary, and open-ended.
>
> Hence in literature any particular "work" is linear rather than circular in structure, extensible rather than terminal in intent, and at any given point inclusive rather than associative in substance; at least these are its tendencies. And it is autobiographical, that goes without saying. It is an act of self-creation by an artist within the tumult of experience.

The break with classicism has produced, then, not a new form of Romanticism — which remains too cozy, self-indulgent and uncritical to be adequate to the realities of the period — but an Existential art, as tense and stringent as its classic forebears but far less restricted, since its subject is precisely those violent confusions from which both the Augustans and the Neoclassicists of the last hundred years withdrew nervously and with distaste.

For example, a poem by T. S. Eliot is opaque; it gathers the light into itself and gives back only the image of its own perfection. In contrast, a poem by Robert Lowell, though no less carefully constructed, is like a transparent filter; you look through it to see the man as he is. Similarly, in *The Armies of the Night,* Norman Mailer takes a fragment of contemporary history in which he played a part (the March on the Pentagon in October, 1967), presents it, like a good journalist, in all its attendant farce, muddle and political jostling, and yet at the same time transforms it into an internal scenario in which all the conflicting, deadening facts take on a sharpened coherence as reflections in the somewhat bloodshot eye of his own developing consciousness as an artist. The politics of power are replaced by the politics of experience.

None of this absolves the artist from the labor of art — which is one reason, among many, why the confessional poets who follow Ginsberg seem so sad. On the contrary, the more directly an artist confronts the confusions of experience, the greater the demands on his intelligence, control and a certain watchfulness; the greater, too, the imaginative reserves he must tap so as not to weaken or falsify

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what he knows. But the intelligence required is essentially different from that of classical art. It is provisional, dissatisfied, restless. As D. H. Lawrence said of his own free verse: "It has no finish. It has no satisfying stability, satisfying for those who like the immutable. None of this. It is the instant; the quick." What is involved, then, is an artistic intelligence working at full pitch to produce not settled classical harmonies but the tentative, flowing, continually improvised balance of life itself. But because such a balance is always precarious, work of this kind entails a good deal of risk. And because the artist is committed to truths of his inner life often to the point of acute discomfort, it becomes riskier still.

It is here that post-Arnoldian art joins with what I have called the dimension of absurd death: the artistic revolution of the last decade and a half has occurred, I think, as a response to totalitarianism in Mailer's sense of the word: not as so many isolated facts out there in another country and another political system for which somebody else is responsible, but as part of the insidious atmosphere we breathe. The nihilism and destructiveness of the self — of which psychoanalysis has made us sharply and progressively more aware — turns out to be an accurate reflection of the nihilism of our own violent societies. Since we can't, apparently, control it on the outside, politically, we can at least try to control it in ourselves, artistically.

The operative word is "control." The Extremist poets are committed to psychic exploration out along that friable edge that divides the tolerable and the intolerable; but they are equally committed to lucidity, precision and a certain vigilant directness of expression. In this, they have more in common with the taxingly high standards set by Eliot and the other grandmasters of the nineteen-twenties than with the Surrealists, who were concerned with the wit, or whimsicality, of the unconscious. Out of the haphazard, baroque connections of the mind running without restraints the Surrealists created what is, essentially, a landscape art. In comparison, the Extremist artists are committed to the stage below this, a stage before what Freud called "the dream-work" begins. That is, they are committed to the raw materials of dreams; all the griefs and guilts and hostility which dreams express only elliptically, by displacement and disguise, they seek to express directly, poignantly, skillfully and in full consciousness. Extremism, in short, has more in common with psychoanalysis than with Surrealism.

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In poetry the four leading English-language exponents of the style are Robert Lowell, John Berryman, Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath, all of whom are highly disciplined and highly aware of formal demands and possibilities. All begin with a thickly textured, wary, tensely intelligent style they inherited ultimately from Eliot, and progress, in their different ways, towards a poetry in which the means, though no less demanding, are subordinate to a certain inner urgency which makes them push continually at the limits of what poetry can be made to bear. Inevitably so, since each of them is knowingly salvaging his verse from the edge of some kind of personal abyss. The crucial work was Lowell's *Life Studies* in which he turned away from the highly wrought Roman Catholic symbolism of his earlier poetry in order to face — without benefit of clergy, and in a translucent, seemingly more casual style — his own private chaos as a man subject to periodic breakdowns. By some odd creative logic, compounded partly of his great natural gifts and partly of some hitherto unrecognized need in his audience — an impatience, perhaps, with strictly aesthetic criteria which took no count of the confusions and depressions of a life unredeemed by poetry — the more simply and personally he wrote, the more authentic and authoritative his work became. He transformed the seemingly private into a poetry central to all our anxieties.

In much the same way, John Berryman turned from the public, literary world of *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet* to the still stylized but far more intimate cycle of *Dream Songs*. These began as a quirky poetic journal of misdemeanors, gripes, hangovers and morning-after despair, then gradually clarified and deepened into an extended act of poetic mourning for the suicide of a father, the premature deaths of friends and his own suicidal despair. Berryman had always been a poet of bristling nervous energy; now his sense of grief and loss added an extra, urgent dimension to his work, impelling it through the whole process of mourning — guilt, hostility, expiation — which ends with the beautifully lucid acceptance of his own mortality. He ends, that is, writing his own epitaph.

Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath, belonging to a younger generation, began further along the road and explored further into the hinterland of nihilism. Thus Hughes starts with a series of extraordinary animal poems, full of sharp details and unexpected shifts of focus, in which he elegantly projects onto a whole zooful of creatures

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whatever unpredictable violence he senses in himself. Then gradually, as in a case of demonic possession, the animals begin to take over; the portraits turn into soliloquies in which murder is no longer disguised or excused, the poet himself becomes both predator and prey of his own inner violence. Like the Yugoslav poet Vasco Popa, Hughes exercises strict control over his private monsters by making them subject to arbitrary rules, as in some psychotic child's game, but he also carries the hunt on into the darkness with exceptional single-mindedness.

It is with Sylvia Plath that the Extremist impulse becomes total and, literally, final. In the briefest terms, her dissatisfaction with the elegant, rather arty style of her early poems more or less coincided with the appearance of *Life Studies*. Lowell proved that it was possible to write about these things without sinking into the witless morals of "confessional" verse. And this was the excuse she had been waiting for, the key to unlock the reserves of pain which had built up steadily since her father's premature death when she was a child and her own suicide attempt at the age of twenty. In the mass of brilliant poems which poured out in the last few months of her life she took Lowell's example to its logical conclusion, systematically exploring the nexus of anger, guilt, rejection, love and destructiveness which made her finally take her own life. It is as though she had decided that, for her poetry to be valid, it must tackle head-on nothing less serious than her own death, bringing to it a greater wealth of invention and sardonic energy than most poets manage in a lifetime of so-called affirmation.

If the road had seemed impassable, she proved that it wasn't. It was, however, one-way, and she went too far along it to be able, in the end, to turn back. Yet her actual suicide, like Lowell's breakdowns or the private horrors of Berryman and Hughes, is by the way; it adds nothing to her work and proves nothing about it. It was simply a risk she took in handling such volatile material. Indeed, what the Extremists have in common is not a style but a belief in the value, even the necessity, of risk. They do not deny it like our latter-day aesthetes, nor drown it in the benign, warm but profoundly muddied ocean of hippy love and inarticulateness. This determination to confront the intimations not of immortality but of mortality itself, using every imaginative resource and technical skill to bring it close, understand it, accept it, control it, is finally what distinguishes

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genuinely advanced art from the fashionable crowd of pseudo-avant-gardes. On these terms, an artist could live to be as old as Robert Frost or Ezra Pound and yet still, in his work, be a suicide of the imagination.

I am suggesting, in short, that the best modern artists have in fact done what that Hiroshima survivor thought impossible: out of their private tribulations they have invented a public "language which can comfort guinea pigs who do not know the cause of their death." That, I think, is the ultimate justification of the highbrow arts in an era in which they themselves seem less and less convinced of their claims to attention and even existence. They survive morally by becoming, in one way or another, an imitation of death in which their audience can share; to achieve this the artist, in his role of scapegoat, finds himself testing out his own death and vulnerability for and on himself.

It may be objected that the arts are also about many other things, often belligerently so; for example, that they are preoccupied as never before with sex. But I wonder if sexual explicitness isn't a diversion, almost a form of conservatism. After all, that particular battle was fought and won by Freud and Lawrence in the first quarter of this century. The old guard may grumble and occasionally sue, but in a society where *Portnoy's Complaint* is a record-breaking best seller sexual permissiveness is no longer an issue. The real resistance now is to an art which forces its audience to recognize and accept imaginatively, in their nerve ends, the facts not of life but of death and violence, absurd, random, gratuitous, unjustified and inescapably part of the society we have created. "There is only one liberty," wrote Camus in his *Notebooks,* "to come to terms with death. After which, everything is possible."

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L. Woiwode

OWEN'S FATHER

Just recently, at the age of twenty-three, Owen Bierdeman had begun to feel the influence of his father. It was neither a pleasant influence nor a good one. His father was dead; he'd been dead for fifteen years. Throughout childhood and adolescence Owen had felt the need, common to those deprived of a parent when young, to fill in the vague outline of his father, to invent traits and predilections and features for him, to fashion a man out of a shadow, and since Owen remembered little of his father and his mother could not or would not respond to any questions about her husband, Owen had fabricated and now found himself faced with a vast and spurious personality. His mother was alive, a tangible presence Owen could rebel against, make amends with, manipulate, hate, love; but every time he tried to think of his father it was as though he were beating against blackness. And when Owen moved to Manhattan a year ago, freeing himself from home and all that was familiar, a change came over him. Working at the Overseas Press Club, where he edited teletype dispatches, or pacing in his studio apartment on Sullivan Street, he began to feel — first with amazement, then with pride, then distaste, then fear — that many of his attitudes, gestures and even a certain tone of voice, had about them the feeling of being familiar. They were his father's. It was then that Owen realized it was essential for him to separate what he had invented from the truth.

He remembered his father as an imposing man, tall and muscular, and it wasn't until a few months ago, when he was spending Christmas at home with his mother in Chicago, that Owen discovered how mistaken he'd been. Most of his father's papers and personal effects

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had been disposed of after his death. Owen had a vivid memory of his mother gathering these all together (in grief or fury, he wasn't sure which, but in definite haste), and giving them to the garbage man. So it was with great surprise that Owen, sorting through mementos, photographs, spelling certificates and report cards from his own grammar school days, came across the passport. The man staring up at him from the passport was open-faced, with shy, wide eyes and a small chin, and his delicate features made him appear frail and childlike. The only strong feature was the dark line of the eyebrows. His height was listed as five feet six inches, three inches less than Owen's, and this was his father. The passport was issued in 1953, the year of his death. Owen's hands started trembling. He slipped the passport into his pocket and took it with him when he returned to New York.

He spent many of his spare hours lying on the studio couch in his apartment, studying the face of the man. The square picture became an opening through which Owen could return to regions of the past that had been sealed off to him, and as he traveled down old corridors — listening to voices, experiencing forgotten sensations, watching scenes replay themselves — he felt he was beginning to learn the identity of his father, and this seemed to bring him closer to a knowledge of himself.

In the earliest scene the face took him to, Owen was sitting on the grass. It was twilight. The grass was wet and the moist air was filled with a sweet smell. In front of Owen was a flowerbed. Its blossoms stood at eye level, showing up bright against the dark bars of an iron fence. Coming from behind, flowing over him in a steady, reassuring stream, was the sound of adult voices, many voices, carrying on a spirited conversation. Owen was pulling up flowers and putting them in his lap. Suddenly there was a shrill cry and the conversation stopped. Then his mother's face was in front of him, her lips moving in anger. She took the flowers from Owen and started slapping his hands. With another shrill cry, she disappeared. First Owen heard a burst of laughter from behind and then sounds of movement in the flowerbed. His mother rose out of the flowers, straightened her dress, shook back her hair and walked past Owen toward the laughter. Had she fallen? Then the stems in front of Owen parted and his father's face appeared. There was a flower between his teeth.

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On the days when Owen was left alone with his father, many times if he weren't mistaken, he remembered the two of them playing with his toys, rolling a croquet ball back and forth across the wooden floor and shoving toy trucks toward one another to make them crash; he remembered his father walking on his hands all the way down the hall, all the way up the stairs, and then doing a handspring at the top and landing on his feet; he remembered his father dressing up like a bum and ringing their doorbell to ask for crackers; and he remembered the time his father carried tables — end tables, the kitchen table, the table from the library — into the parlor, set them in a row, covered them with blankets and rugs, and made a tunnel that ran from the door of the master bedroom, through the parlor, to the door of the dining room. Sitting in the middle of the tunnel, Owen's father began telling a ghost story. In the semidarkness, Owen could see just his father's teeth and the whites of his eyes, and as his father got deeper into the story Owen noticed that the whites of his eyes were growing more and more round. When his father came to the finish, there was a long silence, and then he whispered to Owen, "Let's get the hell out of here," and Owen could still feel the chill that followed at his back as the two of them thundered on their hands and knees toward the end of the tunnel.

Also, when they were alone together, his father would sit beside him on the couch, one of his arms around Owen to steady the book that rested in Owen's lap. Owen had no memory of either of them speaking at these times, although they must have, but he did recall a feeling of complicity and involvement between them, communicated to Owen by the agreeable sensation that traveled over his shoulders every time his father turned a page. Sometime later, on a Sunday morning when his parents were in bed and Owen was wandering from room to room in the large, silent house with nothing to do, he saw the Sunday paper drop through a slot in the front door. He took it to the living room, sat on the couch, and started paging through the comic section. His mother came out of the bedroom and he pointed out a word and asked her what it meant. She sat down beside him, and in a short while realized what he was doing. "Gene," she called. "*Eu*gene, come in here!" When Owen's father appeared, in his bathrobe, she said, "He's reading the paper, for goodness' sake! He can *read*." His father shrugged, and said, "I should hope so. He's almost five." There was a look of blank un-

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concern on his face. But when Owen's mother rose and went toward the kitchen, complaining about his frivolous attitude and inability to show concern for anything, even his own son, he winked at Owen and with a smile on his face went through a silent pantomime of clapping his hands.

A couple of years after this, a great change came over Owen's father, a change that manifested itself then — and now, too, and for as far into the future as anyone wanted to see — in his signature in the passport. The handwriting was flat and erratic, loosely formed, almost indecipherable, and it displayed none of the vanity, quirkiness, care, or pretension that is present in most signatures, but looked, rather, like a reminder someone had scribbled to himself on a note pad. His father's lighthearted humor left him and he became silent and morose. He began to lose weight, and gathers appeared in the material of his trousers. Visitors and dinner guests showed up at the house with less frequency (Owen's grandparents were dead, and both of his parents were only children), and Owen's father, who was a professor of history, stopped doing imitations of his students, stopped reading aloud the absurd answers from their test papers, which even Owen recognized as funny, and stopped working in his library, where he was completing a textbook.

Owen could remember the way his father had walked before the change, briskly, with long determined strides (this is perhaps why Owen had retained an image of a tall man), his hands plunged into his front pockets instead of swinging loose, as though their movement could impede his tremendous momentum, because when he walked it looked as if he were off balance and hurrying forward to prevent a fall. But now he wandered aimlessly around the house, much as Owen did on Sunday mornings, his thin, sensitive hands hanging limp at his sides, looking naked, his eyes expressionless.

During this time, Owen remembered waking at strange hours and blinking against the bright overhead light in his bedroom. His father would be seated in a chair beside the bed, playing his guitar, staring at Owen as he sang. He sang a number of songs each night, but there were two he sang without fail; one of them told the story of a man who is hanged from the gallows tree, which was adapted, Owen later discovered, from a poem by Robert Burns, and the other one was about bells, different bells in different cities. Owen could

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remember only one of the last verses, but he could still hear, even to this hour, the tone of his father's voice as he sang

All will be well if — if — if —
Say the green bells of Cardiff.

When his father finished singing, he rose without a word and switched off the light, and all Owen could see was a silhouette against the lighted doorway. The silhouette grew larger and larger, became a shadow that engulfed Owen, and then Owen felt a kiss on his lips. The shadow's breath was sweet and cidery. (This smell, as Owen later learned from his own experience, was of beer.) Then the shadow moved away from Owen and a silhouette, enlarged by a guitar, went toward the doorway and for a second, as it was struck by the hall light, was changed into Owen's father, who disappeared, his footsteps going down the carpeted stairs and then resounding in the hardwood foyer. Then the lighted doorway Owen was staring at went black.

One night Owen woke to darkness (trees shielding the window kept his room as dark as a closet) and heard voices downstairs. There was a merciless, urgent quality about them, and they sounded like the voices of strangers. Owen could only imagine a few reasons for strangers being in the house at that hour, none of them good reasons, and as he continued to listen, his eyes in motion as though sight were requisite to hearing, his apprehension turned to alarm. The voices did not belong to strangers. They were the voices of his father and mother, pitched in a way he'd never heard them pitched. He went to the stairwell. The voices were coming from the other end of the house, not from the master bedroom, as he'd thought, and he couldn't make out what they were saying. He went slowly down the stairs, went in silence across the hardwood foyer and stepped into the parlor. The dining room ahead was dark, but the tops and edges of furniture gleamed and a pair of glass candlesticks cast rainbow-tinted streaks across the table. The light came from the kitchen. His parents were arguing there. Owen had heard them argue before, and it shamed him, and he would have hurried back upstairs if it hadn't been for the quality of their voices; they sounded as if they were defending themselves against a third person.

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". . . not normal," his mother was saying. "A normal person wouldn't act like this."

"How would he? What the hell's normal?"

"A normal person would accept it."

"I did, once."

"This is something I just remembered."

"Remembered, hell! How many more are you going to remember, and at what opportune times?"

"Look at your own past. Do you like what you see?"

"At least I've been truthful about it."

"And so have I, now."

"Now, now, now! When the hell will now ever stop?"

"Stop it! Don't you see what you're doing?"

"Do you see what *you're* doing, for Christ's sake?"

There was a sound of rapid footsteps, a clattering sound, and Owen started trembling.

"Is this what you want?"

When cries of fright came from his mother, Owen was convinced there was a third person in the room and he ran into the kitchen. His mother was just inside the door, standing against the table, her back to him, and his father was at the far end of the room beside the refrigerator. He held a knife in his hand.

"What are you doing down here?" his father said. "Get upstairs!"

"Now look what you've done," his mother said to his father. "Just look what you've done! Aren't you proud of yourself?"

"Get back upstairs!"

Owen ran across the room, took hold of his father's pants leg, and started kicking his shins and screaming. His mother pulled Owen away, wrestled and dragged him upstairs, got him into his bedroom and gave him the hardest, most prolonged and most painful spanking he'd received in his life. It was only after his mother left the room and locked the door behind her that the details of the scene in the kitchen registered in Owen's mind, and he realized (or was this a distortion caused by time? by the growing bitterness between Owen and his mother?) that his father wasn't threatening his mother with the knife. He held the blade against his own heart.

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THAT weekend, the three of them got into the car and drove to their cabin at Lake Geneva. No one spoke on the way up. A gray sky and the whine of tires on pavement. Instead of standing on the high ridge in the center of the car and leaning his elbows on the front seat, as he usually did, so he could see the passing countryside, Owen sat alone in the back, watching telephone wires sweep slowly up in a rhythm as regular as his breath and then drop, as though gone, only to start climbing upward once again until a treetop, exploding into view, broke the sequence. In the resort town, Owen's father and mother went into a grocery store and came out with supplies. They put them in the back seat with Owen. When they arrived at the cabin, they discovered that a dead limb had blown down from a tree and broken out two windows. Owen's father predicted that the fishing equipment and kitchen utensils would be gone, but nothing inside had been touched.

It was a cold fall day, evening was coming on, and since there was no hope of getting the windows repaired until the next day, Owen's mother hung bath towels over them. They had owned the cabin for less than a year, and had used it just in the summer. Owen's father had to clean old beer cans and trash out of the firebox before he could light the stove — a low oil burner that sat in the main room of the cabin. A small bedroom led off this room, and there was also a kitchen with enough space for dining. As soon as dinner was over they went to bed, exhausted, Owen's parents in the bedroom and Owen on a couch close to the stove.

What followed was fragmented and vague in Owen's mind. He woke outside on the grass, on his stomach, his nostrils filled with an acid, sewery smell, and something was on top of him, crushing him, being lifted off for a second, then crushing him again. From a great height a voice he'd never heard was repeating, "Answer me. Answer me." Owen took a deep breath and as he released it realized he was screaming. He felt he'd drawn fire into his lungs. He started coughing and the coughing increased the pain. Then he was vomiting, and hands lifted him by the rib cage and held him away from the grass. Next he was in somebody's arm, he felt the person striding, he heard the person murmuring words of comfort, and then Owen

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was placed on the cabin steps beside his mother. She took him in her arms and said, "Thank God, thank God," and the shining trails of tears on her face made Owen begin crying. He believed his father was to blame for the horrible thing that had happened, whatever had happened, and the proof of this was the conspicuous absence of his father, which hurt Owen as much as anything else. He pulled away from his mother and saw, leaning against a tree a few feet away, his father, who was staring at the two of them with a fear in his eyes that Owen had never seen before.

If anybody was to blame for the incident, it was the person who installed the oil burner. Owen's father cursed himself for neglecting to check the vent pipe of the burner. Instead of standing above the level of the roof, as it should have, the pipe stopped below the eaves, where there was hardly any circulation of air, and the poisonous gases from burning had backed into the cabin. Owen's father had waked, suffocating, in the middle of the night, had carried Owen outside, had carried out his wife, who revived in the fresh air, and for nearly five minutes had given artificial respiration to Owen. But according to his father, "The act of Providence that broke those windows is what saved your life, not me. That and your mother's natural proclivities. Any other woman would have covered those holes up with something solid."

The half-moons at the base of Owen's fingernails were cherry-red in color, he and his parents had headaches the rest of the weekend, and none of them felt well enough to eat. Nevertheless, Owen remembered those two days as the happiest of his childhood. Though his father's light-hearted humor didn't really return, he became teasing and effusive in a way he'd never been. And there was a new feeling of closeness between the three; they were content to sit in the cabin by themselves and entertain one another. Owen's father played the guitar and sang. His mother told of a trip to San Francisco, taken when she was a girl, which Owen had never heard about. They started *Anna Karenina* together, each of them in turn reading a chapter aloud. With his parents sitting on either side of him, prompting him gently when he came to a difficult word, Owen forgot his usual bashfulness, and felt pleasure as he read — pride, even. "When you come to one of those long, impossible last names," his father said, "rattle it off fast, like me, then everybody will figure you know what you're doing."

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On the last evening of their stay at the cabin, they walked along the edge of the lake, their hands linked, and looked at the cabins and houses, at the summer mansions, and at the docks where dozens of boats, drawn out of the water for winter, were hanging under roofs of corrugated tin, swinging with the wind, light glancing off their hulls. The wind moved the branches of the trees above them, and leaves scattered across their path. They stopped, their hands still linked. Far out on the lake, a small rowboat stood alone on the water. Against the channel of moonlight on the lake, they could see the silhouette of a single man in the boat, and the thin fishing rod, which from the position of his hands the man apparently held, was invisible. Occasionally the wind carried to them the sound of the man's voice. He was singing to himself in a gentle bass. "He must be scared out there," Owen's father said. "That's why he keeps that singing up. He's trying to scare off what he's scared of." And then he added, in an altered voice, "Or else the past." And Owen felt the fingers of his mother's hand tense.

WHEN they returned home, the feeling that had bound them together was gone. Owen's father woke him more and more at night, he drank more, and many mornings there was no breakfast waiting for Owen, and since Owen was afraid to disturb his mother, who appeared to be ill and was keeping to her bedroom, Owen usually went off to school without breakfast. A couple of weeks later Owen's father left for Lake Geneva, saying that he had to fix the windows and stove before winter. He was supposed to be gone for the entire weekend, so Owen was surprised when he saw him come through the front door the next morning, tense and expectant, and hurry into the master bedroom. Owen went back to the kitchen table and continued eating the breakfast that he, out of necessity, had grown accustomed to fixing for himself — cold cereal and milk. His father came into the kitchen, with his overcoat still on, and sat down at the table. His face was drawn and pale, and he wouldn't look at Owen.

"Did your mother put you to bed last night?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Did you fall asleep right away?"

"No. I couldn't."

"Did you hear anybody come or go in the house?"

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"Who? Why? Is something wrong?"

"Of course not. Did you hear anybody?"

"No."

"You're sure?"

"Yes. Isn't Mom here?"

"Of course she's here! What's the matter with you?"

"Is something wrong out at the lake?"

"What's the matter with you, anyway? Where do you get the idea that something always has to be wrong?" And then his father got up and left the table.

That week, the week of Thanksgiving, Owen's father had no classes at the university and stayed at home. His mother was in bed, sick with a bad cold, his father said, and "strep throat, strep throat." His father lifted his chin and made raking motions with his fingers down the front of his neck. That was practically all his father said to relieve the silence. The rest of the time he wandered around in a bathrobe, his cheeks turning dark with the beard he didn't bother to shave, and performed such menial tasks as cleaning up and washing the dishes, fixing Owen's meals and waiting on his wife. When Owen's vacation began, two days later, there was such an unsettled feeling in the house that he spent most of the time in his bedroom upstairs. Often, he would feel eyes on him and look up from his game of solitaire or the book he was reading and see his father standing in the doorway in his bathrobe. "What?" Owen would ask, but his father, whose eyes were glazed with thought, would merely shake his head and walk off. And if Owen went downstairs, his father followed him around the house, trailing in his wake like a younger sibling, silent, and after Owen had returned to his bedroom it would only be a matter of minutes before he felt eyes on him again, and knew his father was in the doorway. Once, in response to Owen's question, his father said, "Who am I?"

"What?"

"Who am I?"

"You."

"Who's that?"

"My Dad."

"Good."

On Thanksgiving Day, Owen came down for dinner, primed

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for the occasion by the festive atmosphere at school, where the teachers kept repeating that Thanksgiving was one of the few holidays celebrated by every family in the nation, and where he had produced colorful cutouts of turkeys and pumpkins and cornucopias overflowing with food, several of which he carried beneath his shirt as a surprise for his parents. Owen walked into the dining room. It was empty; the table wasn't set. Drawn by the smell of cooking, he hurried into the kitchen. His father had their dinner dished out on plates. It was macaroni and cheese. Owen's mother was not at the table.

His father noticed the expression on his face, and said, "I know. I'm sorry. We'll make up for it next year."

Owen sat down and stared at his plate.

"I even checked the mailbox," his father said, in a poor approximation of his bantering voice. "There wasn't a single turkey there. Not even a neck. I guess nobody cares about us anymore."

The edges of Owen's plate appeared to melt, they began wavering, and Owen turned and took hold of the back of his chair and started crying.

"Oh, Owen, what's the matter? Is it the matter with you or the matter with me? You're supposed to laugh."

"I want Thanksgiving!"

"Okay, then," his father said. "All right. That's all you had to say. Here we go."

His father squatted down, made wings of his arms, and began to waddle around the kitchen, gobbling like a turkey. In spite of his tears and the pain it caused, Owen started to laugh, in spasms at first, until he realized that this was the first time in a long time his father had done anything so preposterous, and then his laughter grew and became a relief. His father's face turned bright crimson, and his eyes, focused straight ahead, were beginning to bulge, but he continued to waddle around the room, gobbling louder and louder, in a higher pitched voice, and the kitchen filled with his noise. Then Owen knew something was wrong. His father couldn't stop. Owen got up from the table and backed toward the doorway. The gobbling increased in volume, and his father fell prone and covered his face, making whining animal sounds. Owen turned and ran through the house and up the stairs, and the chill that pursued him now, unlike

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the anonymous one that clung to him as he escaped from the improvised tunnel, began to take on a human shape.

OWEN woke that night from a restless sleep. Had there been a dream? His body was covered with cold sweat. The room was dark, the blackness impenetrable, but after lying awake for a while Owen was sure, judging from the texture of the air as much as from anything else (he was so familiar with the room he could sense any change in it), that he wasn't alone in the room. "Dad?" he said. There was no response. "Dad?" Then he thought he heard the sound of breathing. "Dad?" He held his breath to listen, but his ears filled with the heavy, increasing beat of his own heart. Without the aid of vision, it was impossible to locate the sound he believed he heard, and its source seemed to change. First, it sounded like someone was breathing directly above him, then that someone was breathing beside his right ear, then that someone was standing in the doorway, breathing heavily there.

Owen sat up, or made the muscular equivalents that usually resulted in sitting, and felt he was rising out of his body, weightless, a being as infinite as the dark around him. If he were still lying on the bed, asleep or awake, then this being rising out of him was a person he didn't know. And in its infinitude, it encompassed the room, responding to the breathing as though the breathing were inside it. Then, in a sudden switch, a jarring reversal that assured him he was awake, Owen felt miniature and solid, an eight-year-old boy in a large bed. He'd heard the springs in the chair beside his bed readjust to someone's weight.

"Dad?"

"Don't be afraid. I didn't want to wake you."

"What's wrong?"

"Nothing."

"You sound funny."

"I just wanted to sit with you for a while. Did I frighten you?"

"No," Owen said, too afraid to admit the truth.

"I'm sorry about that commotion I made. Got carried away."

Owen lay in silence, trying to identify the quality in his father's voice.

"Maybe it's better you woke," his father said. "I can do out

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loud what I was doing in silence." He felt along the covers until he found Owen's hand, and Owen nearly pulled away in alarm; his father's hands felt as though they'd been soaked in ice water. "I came in to say goodbye," his father said.

"Where are you going?"

"Up to the cabin for the weekend."

"Can I come?" Owen didn't want to, but he felt it was what his father wanted to hear.

"You don't want to do that. I scare you to death. You're trembling right now." He drew away his hands. "Besides," he said, "I think I should be alone."

Now Owen was afraid he'd hurt his father's feelings. "I want to go," he said. "I want to be with you."

"Maybe later we'll take a trip together. Would you like that?"

"Yes."

"I might even take you out of school to do it. What do you think of that?"

"I like school."

There was a long pause, and in the silence Owen felt a shift in the atmosphere of the room; it was as if a third person had stepped into it.

"If you didn't want me to teach you, I'd get you a tutor," his father said, and the tone of his voice, confirming the altered state of the room, altered it even more.

"What's a tutor?"

"Somebody who'd follow us wherever we went, and teach you all the subjects you wanted to learn whenever you wanted to learn them."

"Where would we go?"

"I don't know. Far. Maybe even out of the States."

"To a foreign country?"

"Maybe." There was a sudden change in his voice that was so brisk, it was as if a light, a bright one, had been switched on. "But that's something we can always talk about later. Right now I want to go up to the cabin for a few days, by myself, and fix that stove I never fixed and think things over. Your mother has an inkling I'm going but she doesn't know for sure when, and I'm not going to bother to wake her, so you tell her in the morning that I've left,

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all right? And you can say I've left a note for her on the buffet. And . . . . Well, I've talked enough. You have to get to sleep, if you aren't already. Are you asleep?"

"No."

"Good. I wanted to talk to you." There was a long silence. "Don't forget to mention the note."

"I won't."

There was a protest of springs as his father leaned forward, and felt over the covers for Owen's hand. He took it in his. "All right," he said. "I'm going now."

Owen could feel his indecision, his suppressed emotion, his reluctance to leave, which was almost a plea, and the dark air began to reverberate as though a tuning fork had been struck. Owen could think of only one thing to say, and he said it. "Sing me a song before you go."

The edge of the mattress sank under the weight of his father's forearms, tilting Owen toward him, there was the dull sound of knees striking the floor, and Owen could smell his father's hair.

"Oh, Owen, I'm sorry."

The strength left Owen. He felt that the bed, holding himself and his father's torso, was dissolving into the darkness, as was the floor, the room, the house around them, and the earth itself was opening to receive them. The fear was communicated through his hand to his father. His father released it and stood up, and as he stood the room returned to its earlier state; there was a third person in it.

His father cleared his throat. "All right. I'm going."

"Do you have to?"

"Yes."

"When will you be back?"

"Soon."

"I miss you already."

"I miss you."

The reverberations in the air began to grow, establishing between them a feeling that was unfamiliar to Owen, and he felt endangered and wanted his father to stay.

"Goodbye, then," his father said.

"Do you have to go?"

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"Yes."
"All right."
"Goodbye."
"Bye."

His father's footsteps descended the carpeted stairs, started across the hardwood foyer, and then stopped, hesitating. The third person left the room. His footsteps, decisive and rapid now, went on across the foyer to the front door: the knob turning, the door swinging in, a key being inserted, footsteps, the door being pulled to, the slam of the latch, the key withdrawn. Silence. The silence spread through the house, gathered in Owen's room, and rested above him like a living presence. Just as he made a resolve to stay awake, an array of brilliant colors erupted in front of his eyes and flowed upward as though from a fountain, fanning out toward the periphery into faint streaks that dimmed and descended, lowering him into sleep.

His waking was abrupt. He believed it was a dream. He was in the cabin and his nostrils were filled with the sewery smell. He was suffocating. He tried to rise up but something heavy covered him. His head ached. There was no air. He made a last effort to roll over on his back, and freed his head from the tangled covers. The air was chilly against his perspiring face.

"Dad?"

OWEN tossed aside the passport, got up from the studio couch and crossed to the window. It was Saturday night. Owen's apartment was on the second floor, and through the bars of the fire escape landing outside his window he watched the weekend crowd — girls with long hair dressed in short skirts and jeans, bearded men, men in suits, tourist couples, and teenagers — move in a press down Sullivan Street. A Puerto Rican delivery boy, holding a flat box of pizza aloft, traveling at twice the speed of the crowd, threaded his way among the people almost in a dance step, and passed beneath Owen's window whistling a Latin song. Owen would have given his right hand, his body and soul, to be him. He turned back to his room. Dust had gathered, the bed was unmade, there were some charred logs in the fireplace that had been left by the previous resident, and the only chair in the apartment, a wooden chair with a broken leg,

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was draped with old newspapers. Just the idea of cleaning up, the recognition of the disorder, made Owen feel empty and fatigued. He eased his weight onto the edge of the windowsill.

The rest of the story was simple. When he woke that night, after his father had left, he lay awake trying to order his impressions, and then, suddenly realizing that it might at last be within his power to uncover the mystery of his parent's behavior, he got out of bed and went down the steps, moving in silence past the master bedroom. A lamp was on in the dining room. Owen went to the buffet. His father's note was lying on its top, weighted with a book of matches. Owen took the note and slipped it under the elastic belt of his pajama bottoms and started toward the stairs. His mother was standing at the end of the hall.

"What are you doing down here?"

"I was looking for Dad."

"At three in the morning?" Her hair was haloed by the light in the bedroom behind her, and it was difficult to see her features.

"I got scared. I had a bad dream."

"You were looking for him in the living room?"

"I saw the light."

"You know perfectly well that your father is asleep in bed."

"No, he isn't."

"What?"

"No, he isn't."

"Are you contradicting me?"

"He went to the cabin. He came and said goodbye to me and said he was going there. He said I was supposed to tell you he went there, if you didn't know."

She reached up and lifted a strand of hair from her face, and her voice became reflective. "Oh. Then he went."

Owen nodded.

"When was this."

"I don't know. It was dark."

"Did he say anything else?"

"No."

"He didn't leave any message for me?"

"He just said he had to fix things up — the stove — and said he'd be back in a couple days."

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She turned, her negligee billowing, went to a panel of switches on the wall and turned on the light of the stairs. "All right. Go to bed now."

Owen walked past her, hearing the paper crackle in his pajamas and started up the steps. The note came loose from his belt. It was working down the leg of his pajamas. He slowed his climb, lifting the leg with care because the cuffs of his pajamas were stretched and no longer fit closely around his ankles.

"Owen!"

He stopped, unable to see her from where he stood, unsure whether she could see him and felt his heartbeat pick up. "Yes."

"If your father said goodbye to you, how does it happen that you were downstairs looking for him?"

Owen felt caught. Finally, in spite of his desperation, or perhaps because of it, an answer formed. "I didn't know for sure if he left yet. I fell asleep for a while, and I wanted to tell him something before he left."

"What did you want to tell him?"

"To see if he could find some pine cones for me for my science class."

He'd forgot about the dream he mentioned. There was a long silence. "All right," his mother said. "Go to bed. I'll turn out the light."

Owen did not go to bed. When the door of the master bedroom closed and there was silence, he went to the dresser, found by touch a penlight and a school notebook that were lying on its top and went into his closet and shut the door. He was sure his mother wouldn't check to see if he was in bed. He took out the note. Shining the penlight on it, he read it through. Then, for the next several hours, he sat in the closet and committed the note to memory, as he'd committed to memory the Gettysburg Address, the Pledge of Allegiance and stanzas of poems. Whenever he came to an unfamiliar word, he made up his own pronunciation for it and copied it down in his notebook in order to have the correct spelling. By the time he emerged from the closet, morning light was beginning to gray his window. He went downstairs and replaced the note and returned to his bedroom and lay under the covers, trying to relate the message to the changed and inexplicable relationship between his parents.

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It's not all histrionics, as you seem to think. It actually is that bad. You can blame that on my childness maybe — I do — but that still doesn't help matters. I need to be alone for a few days so I've gone to the cabin. Then I think Europe for a while and then we'll see. It has to be Europe. Being apart and still being this close just doesn't work, as I've so aptly demonstrated. There's one thing I want you to think over. If it's to be Europe, can Owen come with me? No, please, before you say no, think, think about it, think about what I've said. Please.

It cleared up little, if any, of the mystery, and there the mystery stayed. Three days later Owen's father was dead. His mother would not allow Owen to attend the funeral, there were no relatives on either side to console him or explain, and he really didn't find out the details of the death, other than its cause, until he entered college and learned that back issues of newspapers were recorded on microfilm. He copied down an article which he still had with him.

AREA TEACHER FOUND DEAD IN LAKE GENEVA CABIN

Dr. Eugene T. Bierdeman, associate professor of history at the University of Chicago, was found dead about 11:00 A.M. today in his summer cabin at Lake Geneva in Walworth County, Wisconsin, apparently the victim of carbon monoxide fumes from an oil heater, according to Walworth County sheriff's office.

Dr. Bierdeman was 39 and resided on Bonnie Brae Lane in Clarendon Hills. He has been an instructor for seven years at the University of Chicago, the institution from which he obtained his doctorate in 1941. His area of specialty was the 15th Century.

His immediate superior, Dr. Warren Schilling, said today to reporters, "We are shocked and grieved to learn of this tragedy. Mr. Bierdeman was not only an exemplary teacher but a friend to us all. He was emulated by his colleagues and loved by his students."

Discovery of the body was made by Chief Deputy Wayne Burnett of the Walworth County sheriff's office, who went to the cabin at the request of Bierdeman's wife to find out why Bierdeman had not returned home or appeared to teach his classes this morning.

According to Chief Deputy Burnett, the oil heater had not been functioning properly, he learned from Mrs. Bierdeman, and Bierdeman had specifically made the trip to the 3 room cabin in Linn Township to repair it over the weekend. Burnett said that the stack of the vent pipe was not tall enough to permit proper venting.

Bierdeman had removed the stack, apparently to add to it two additional sections of pipe that were found in the vicinity, but had proceeded no further, possibly because of the approach of darkness, speculated Burnett. Burnett said that Bierdeman apparently assumed that it would now be safe to operate the burner.

But Burnett said that the vent pipe from the heater itself let

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through the side wall of the cabin at the same level as the heater, and authorities are speculating that the wind, which shifted to the South Friday night, prevented the exhaust fumes from escaping from the pipe and forced them back into the cabin.

An alarm clock, set for 7:00 A.M., was found in the cabin and it is believed, from the condition of the body when it was discovered, that Bierdeman died sometime Friday night and that death can be attributed to asphixiation by carbon monoxide fumes.

Inquest into the death has been set for 3:00 P.M. Tuesday in the Walworth County Coroner's office.

Dr. Bierdeman is survived by his wife, Elizabeth, and an only son, Owen.

And for everyone concerned except Owen, that was the story's end.

He went to the studio couch, picked up the passport, folded back its front cover, and stared at the picture, trying to arrange the random but vivid scenes from the past, the remembered fragments that held his father, into a coherent whole, but there was too much that was unresolved, there were too many contradictions, too many gaps, there was too much confusion in Owen's mind — there was no *hope,* he nearly said out loud, and he felt as though the marrow had emptied from his bones.

He went into the bathroom, the passport in one hand, and held his head under the water faucet. He combed back his wet hair. Then, staring into the mirror, he held the passport beside his face and compared the picture of his father to his own image in the mirror. Though the resemblance was not that striking, the two faces, over the months, had become identical in Owen's mind, and now, as he studied them both, he was so arrested by their similarity of expression that he filled with the exhilaration he felt when he saw a woman he wanted to have; his heartbeat quickened, his stomach felt as though he were on a dropping elevator and the objects within his vision, as though assuming lives of their own, lifted away from the surroundings and locked into sharp focus. The third person that he'd once sensed in the room with his father, he now sensed at his side, and he knew it would only be a matter of waiting, now with impatience, now with dread, for the moment when he could no longer tolerate the uncertainty and pressure of the past, and would be freed from it, as he had convinced himself his father had been freed, by the suicide he felt it incumbent upon him to commit.

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Jim Harrison

SEVEN GHAZALS

What will I do with seven billion cubic feet of clouds
in my head? I want to be wise and dispense it for quarters.

All these pushups are making me a muscular fatman. Love would
make me lean and burning. Love. Sorry the elevator's full.

She was zeroed in on by creeps and forgot my meaningful glances
from the door. But then I'm walleyed and wear used capes.

She was built entirely of makeup, greasepaint all the way through
like a billiard ball is a billiard ball beneath its hard skin.

We'll have to leave this place in favor of where the sun
is cold when seen at all, bones rust, it rains all day.

The cat is mine and so is the dog. You take the orchard,
house and car and parents. I'm going to Greenland at dawn.

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I told the dark haired girl to come down out of the apple tree and take her medicine. In a dream I told her so.

We're going to have to do something about the night. The tissue won't restore itself in the dark. I feel safe only at noon.

Waking. Out by the shed, their home, the chicano cherrypickers sing hymns on a hot morning, three guitars and a concertina.

We don't need dimestore surrealists buying objects to write about or all this up-against-the-wall nonsense in Art News.

Even in the wilderness, in Hell Roaring Creek Basin, in this grizzly kingdom, I fear stepping into a hidden missile silo.

My friend has become crippled, back wrenched into an "S" like my brain. We'll go to Judah to wait for the Apocalypse.

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Wondering what this new light is, before he died he walked
across the kitchen and said "My stomach is very cold."

And this haze, yellowish, covers all this morning, meadow,
orchard, woods. Something bad is happening somewhere to her.

I was ashamed of her appalachian vulgarity and vaguely askew
teeth, her bad grammar, her wanting to screw more often than I.

It was May wine and the night liquid with dark and fog when
we stopped the car and loved to the sound of frogs in the swamp.

I'm bringing to a stop all my befouled nostalgia about childhood.
My eye was gored out, there was a war and my nickname was pig.

There was an old house that smelled of kerosene and apples
and we hugged in a dark attic, not knowing how to continue.

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It is an hour before dawn and even prophets sleep
on their beds of gravel. Dreams of fish & hemlines.

The scissors moves across the paper and through
the beard. It doesn't know enough or when to stop.

The bear tires of his bicycle but he's strapped on
with straps of silver and gold straps inlaid with scalps.

We are imperturbable as deer whose ancestors saw the last
man and passed on the sweet knowledge by shitting on graves.

Let us arrange to meet sometime in transit, we'll all take
the same train perhaps, Cendrars' Express or the defunct Wabash.

Her swoon was officially interminable with unconvincing
geometric convulsions, no doubt her civic theatre experience.

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I load my own shells and have a suitcase of pressed
cardboard. Naturally I'm poor and picturesque.

My father is dead and doesn't care if his vault leaks,
that his casket is cheap, his son a poet and a liar.

All the honest farmers in my family's past are watching
me through the barn slats, from the corncrib and hogpen.

Ghosts demand more than wives & teachers. I'll make a
"V" of my two books and plow a furrow in the garden.

And I want to judge the poetry table at the County Fair.
A new form, poems stacked in pyramids like prize potatoes.

This county agent of poetry will tell poets "more potash
& nitrogen, the rows are crooked and the field limp, depleted."

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Now changed. None come to Carthage. No cauldrons, all love comes without oily sacrements. Skin breathes cooler air.

And light was there and two cliff swallows hung and swooped for flies, audible heat from the field where steers fed.

I'm going to Stonehenge to recant, or from the manure pile behind this shed I'm going to admit to a cow I've lied.

He writes with a putty knife and goo, at night the north star hangs on the mountain peak like a christmas tree ornament.

On the table the frozen rattlesnake thaws, the perfect club!
the perfect crime! soon now to be skinned for my hatband.

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If you laid out all the limbs from the Civil War hospital
in Washington they would encircle the White House seven times.

Alaska cost two cents per acre net and when Seward
slept lightly he talked to his wife about ice.

My heart is Grant's for his bottle a day and his
foul mouth, his wife that weighed over five hundred pounds.

A hundred years later Walt Whitman often still
walks the length of the Potomac and on the water.

A child now sees it as a place for funerals and bags
of components beneath the senators' heads.

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Leo Bersani

LANGUAGE AND POLITICS

The spirit of critical, skeptical and — to the extent that this is possible — dispassionate analysis is tested most severely when it must turn its skepticism and its criticism to an analysis of its own conclusions and procedures. I would say that, on the whole, the liberal mind has shown a willingness to engage in such analyses of its positions and that when it has done so it has shown the real virtues of tentativeness, of being authentically open to revision and to rejection of certain cherished ideas. On the other hand, the most subtle strategy for those interested in discrediting liberalism of any kind is to refuse even to engage in critical discussion of it. This is an intolerable blow to proponents of what is assumed to be open, critical, rational inquiry. Intolerable because it constitutes, first of all, a refusal to admit that inquiry should or even can be open, critical and rational, and second, because of the further contention that feelings and ideas are intellectually "nonnegotiable" and derive their validity from the intensity with which they are asserted. Confronted with an assault of this nature, the spirit of open inquiry often tends, understandably but disastrously, to transform itself into a system of closed defenses, thereby seeming to justify the scorn of those who would destroy it.

As teachers in particular know, nothing is more likely to erode one's sympathy for the young than their presumption that to examine what they say is a sign of hostility. Unfortunately, that presumption is by no means entirely unjustified. Indeed, almost all the books I'm about to consider more or less validate the charge. Most crucially, they illustrate, for those of us who continue to be interested in ra-

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tionally critical methods of inquiry, the possibilities *within* those methods for a betrayal of radically critical inquiry. The particular opinions, conclusions and even techniques of investigation of the men I will begin by speaking of have frequently been attacked, but I don't think that the representative and pervasive modes of their thinking and of their language have been adequately explored. By looking closely at some of their statements, I want to show the ease with which an intolerant dogmatism can appropriate the vocabulary and even the procedures of a free and dispassionate analysis of experience.

Among the sociologists in question, the very notion of a free exchange of ideas is, in a sense, a totalitarian one: from the start it precludes the exercise of freedom except for the exchange of ideas. It will perhaps not be surprising to find a closed system masquerading as an open disposition in Talcott Parsons and Seymour Martin Lipset. But the fact that some of the observations we can make about them are also relevant to men whose specific social and psychological commitments are antagonistic to those of Parsons and Lipset makes it worthwhile, I think, to isolate the intellectual procedures which — *toutes proportions gardées* — create a certain continuity between Parsons's inert academicism and the radical politics of, say, Dotson Rader. For certainly a primary function of radical criticism is to determine the congruence or the discrepancy between the ideology implicit in our *approach* to issues and the ideology proclaimed in the stands we take *on* issues.

Equally important, deceptively simple questions about the books I'm about to consider are these: what are they trying to communicate, and to whom? The latter is an especially poignant question, for the subject of all these books is the young — or rather the radical young. You find attacks, scoldings, sympathy, complicity in a literature about the young so massive as to be fast approaching the status of a Field of Concentration. But in their most radical behavior, the young are not asking for "measures" of either approval or disapproval. Rather, they seem to be offering spectacles which we can either participate in or turn our backs on. Observers of youth often remarks with satisfied sophistication that the extravagances of the young are "theater," are "symbolic." The young themselves are fully aware of that aspect of their conduct, and the issue is rather to know how to respond to theater. The use of literary terms is appropriate.

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The most exciting recent literary criticism has been an attempt to break down the entrenched antagonism between criticism and literature. Criticism, in its most familiar academic form, is the enemy of literature: analytical, detached, reductive and judgmental; such criticism, although inspired by art, is antithetical to the nature of art. The passionate, nonanalytical intelligence of the artist has been the object of the critic's idolatry and suspicion, the alien, threatening nature to which criticism has given an appearance both tame and supernaturally awesome by enclosing it in the sacred zoo of Culture. Is a reenactment of the intentions and the spirit of art incompatible with criticism? Is there a way of elucidating sense from art which does not merely translate its existence into fixed "meanings" which make its very mode of existence appear superfluous?

If there is a way, it would involve neither repeating the contents of specific acts of art, nor being inspired equally by all such acts. It may, however, mean the disappearance of written criticism. Art may finally seduce us out of discussion and into our own experiments in the restructuring of consciousness. If the re-forming of critical responses does not mean the disappearance of criticism, it does imply new definitions of both interpretation and judgment. The former would be a kind of respeaking of the text, an explicit version of implicit structures. The two dangers here are of course those of mere paraphrase and, at the other extreme, of a thematic generality indifferent to particular contexts. Finally, the judgment of art would be contained in the richness, the coherence and the imaginative originality of the critic's own performance — which would at least have the advantage of reintegrating supposedly objective evaluations into the experience which determines them, that is, into the critic's own stimulations and satisfactions.

This, I think, would be the sort of criticism the radical young deserve. Like all critical acts, the criticism of reenactment involves a certain distance from the text. The assumption of Jerry Rubin's *Do It!* — an assumption many of the radical young would agree to — is that to take the distance is already to make a negative judgment of the political goals which yippie performances claim to serve. The latter seem to demand the preemption of a radical politics by a particular style of political behavior. The reason for opposing this demand is that it is no more than a polemical strategy against *other* political

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styles; it is not the natural consequence of a self-evident truth. More specifically, Rubin's "instant confrontations," precisely because they are symbolic, require a critical reading of the messages dramatized in the symbols. It is true that critical distance is never ideologically neutral, and even the most sympathetic "analysis" of Rubin is in itself a chosen alternative to Rubin. But if the first job of radical criticism is to examine the assumptions and commitments which inevitably restrict and give shape to the field in which it attempts to conduct an "open inquiry," the recognition of one's commitments does not have to be used as an argument for making them immune to scrutiny. And we must demonstrate that a kind of dialectic of passion and distance in criticism is fundamentally different from the intellectual virtuosity with which many liberal minds use the principle of free inquiry in order to justify their intolerance of free inquiry.

Lewis Feuer is an extreme example of sham in the conduct of rational analysis. Unlike some of his more controlled colleagues in academia, he puts his prejudices on the line, and his vulnerability to counterattack makes of *The Conflict of Generations* a rather sad if nasty book. Feuer does have some sort of hope for the young: "If social understanding can isolate and study [the demonic component in student movements], perhaps the hatreds, projections, and guilts of generational revolt may be rendered less dominant, and a higher idealism emerge." But to say that there are "obscure unconscious workings of generational conflict" in student movements is not to say much more than that the idealism of the young is idealism embodied *in* the young. Feuer of course doesn't see it that way: "The most crucial test [of the hypothesis of generational struggle] is the character of the emotions which prevailed at the moments of decision, the moments of action." Even if we agree that the nature of the motivation is the most appropriate criterion for judging the value of behavior (a very big "if"), how can we know what "the young's" unconscious motivations are? They rebel, Feuer suggests, because they hate their fathers, and that hatred accounts for the amoral and suicidal elements of the rebellion. But Feuer ignores studies which have shown that many activists have the sympathetic support of their parents. In such cases, the evidence for generational conflict is at least as much in the mind of the observer as in the observed. Feuer himself suggests as much when he writes that the

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breakdown of "generational equilibrium" (an equilibrium which, until recently, has been characteristic of American society) is "a sign of a sickness, a malady in society." Sons get along well with their fathers under certain social conditions; under others, they don't. But if this is the case (which it obviously is), severe generational conflicts are not the *cause* of severe generational conflicts (this tautology is the heart of Feuer's "argument"), but are rather caused *by* something else. Why aren't sons always in violent revolt against their fathers? The dissatisfaction of the young may manifest itself as generational conflict, but the conflict is a sign and not a reason.

The "unconscious" in Feuer is nothing more than the dirty word which expresses his own horror of what the young are now doing. It redirects our attention from the social conditions in which generational conflicts appear to Feuer's own psychological imagination — an imagination posing as the invisible truth behind the young's behavior. And there is something frantic about these projections. Feuer seldom allows his reductive conclusions to be affected by the evidence he himself offers. A quotation in which Alvah Bessie, speaking of the reasons why he fought in the Spanish Civil War, confesses that his passion for social justice was "a shade weaker" than his desire "to achieve self-integration" and to further his "development as a man," is presented by Feuer as a document of self-punishment, of self-annihilation. Why? Because for the American volunteers in Spain, Feuer writes, "by a curious process of projection and misperception, 'our eternal enemy-oppression' was somehow identified with the source of their middle-class training." But what if the identification is a valid one? Feuer doesn't even ask the question, because (to use his own tools of analysis) he cannot conceive of a rebellion against the father which is not a suicide.

This, I would guess, is the profound psychological reason which makes Feuer so indifferent to what's going on in the father's house. All he has to say about Vietnam is: "The fathers favor a policy of war in Vietnam; therefore, the rebellious sons are for peace." The horror of Berkeley is that it "was the intellectual precursor for Watts," and the lawless, violent, obscene mobs at Columbia "gave the sanction of similar action to the uneducated and the poor." Is there no need at all to argue whether or not the poor have the *right* to take that action? For Feuer, obviously not, for the father (middle-class America) must apparently be allowed to do anything if the son is to

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survive. The rebellious children of middle-class American society terrify Feuer. They terrify him because they really *are* his father, and their self-destruction may be his destruction.

America, the gentle, decent home in which, Feuer incredibly writes, ". . . the System is so economically stable that it provides jobs and opportunities for the willing and capable." Original sin in Lewis Feuer's universe occurs not when that economy brutalizes people, but rather when it stops admiring itself. If the rich of America no longer love themselves, what was the use of all those immigrant sons struggling so hard to make it in the American Home? These young affluent fools must be made to love themselves again — and here we see the usefulness of creating an unconscious for them which they can get rid of. For not everyone has an unconscious in Feuer: it is the despicable luxury of those who have never known what it is to work hard just to have a room and a meal. "The heroism of miners, pioneers, seamen, railwaymen, builders is of a different order [from the hero of the youthful unconscious]; the struggle with the material environment, with a hostile nature, for the sake of one's survival, livelihood, or the advancement of human knowledge, call on all one's resources, and make obsolete and irrelevant one's conflicts with one's father." Wouldn't that be nice. I don't know if constant struggle with one's environment eliminates the unconscious; I thought it was common knowledge that ghettos produce some awful psychological problems. But Feuer is of course talking about our nineteenth-century myths rather than our twentieth-century realities, and the therapeutic "struggle for existence" which he recommends as a cure for the unconscious is a peculiar Utopia in which not just the unconscious but thought itself would have ceased to function.

The Conflict of Generations is a terrible, moving testimony to the tenacity of the American dream. It suggests that for many of us the dream has been so seductive and so powerful that it has left no space in which to experiment with identities external to it. To lose America would be to lose ourselves. Strangely enough, Feuer's hostility to the young who threaten to destroy his father in themselves is not unlike the violent nihilism of those whose only response to America is to throw bombs at it. They, like him, are possessed by the enemy they hate. Total love or total hate; in both cases, total

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absorption in a father who can be rejected only in gestures of self-annihilation.

Because of his profound involvement with the young, however, Feuer can strike us as cantankerously avuncular compared to the really cool cats of reaction who have their say in *Confrontation: The Student Rebellion and the Universities* (edited by Daniel Bell and Irving Kristol) and in *Students in Revolt* (edited by Seymour Martin Lipset and Philip G. Altbach). I hadn't read sociologists' prose for a long time. I remembered being bored by it in college, but, now that we are all a little more adept at reading hidden messages in language, my reintroduction to this very special tribe was somewhat frightening. Listen to Talcott Parsons, who has just worked up to the conclusion that the academic system is "not primarily an 'engine' of change" in society, nor is it "a bulwark of the status quo":

> Such considerations indicate that both the values and the concrete interests of the academic system give it a primary stake in maintaining a balance of differentiation within and integration in what is, in the broadest sense, a liberal, legally ordered, and pluralistic society. In this general sense, it is structurally congruent with the main outlines of such a society; the two are for the most part mutually supportive, though not without very considerable strain and conflict. One such conflict centers around the questions of which involvement of "outside" interest within the academic community should be considered legitimate. There seems to be a considerable range of permissible variation in these respects. Thus some institutions may prefer not to have ROTC programs; an issue that seems to be parallel to that of contracts for classified research. Whether or not recruiters for outside agencies, such as the armed services of [?] industrial firms, should be allowed to use campus facilities seems to be a similar question. General policies about such questions seem legitimately to be somewhat negotiable, with the presumption that students as well as administrations and faculties should have a voice in the decisions—though not usually the one deciding voice.

What have you learned from this paragraph? What is its message? Does it convey information, outline an argument, verbalize a burst of passion? Clearly, it does none of these things; rather, it is

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significant without saying anything. I don't know what "liberal" "in the broadest sense" means. I would like to know what the relation is between "structural congruence" and other kinds of congruence — say, moral congruence. I would also like to know what the conditions are which prevent "very considerable strain and conflict" from spoiling the "mutually supportive" relation between the university and society. What are the boundaries of "permissible" variation in questions of university involvement with outside interests? What is it exactly that makes the issue of contracts for classified research "parallel" to the ROTC issue? How negotiable is "somewhat" negotiable? What are the occasions on which students *should* have the "one deciding voice" on such issues (since "usually" they shouldn't)?

Parsons will never tell. Most of the questions I have just asked at least assume the possibility of a real incompatibility between the university and society. But since the closest Parsons comes to a statement is to write that the academic system has a "stake" in remaining similar to the social system in which it is placed, the "strain and conflict" are really not strain and conflict at all, but rather conform to the expectations of a "pluralistic" society. The university's "differentiation within" that society, given Parsons's premise of "structural congruence" between the two, is *part of* its integration. The most important word in the paragraph is "seems": it is used so bizarrely — for the most innocuous observations — that, instead of functioning as a sign of uncertainty, it detaches itself from what follows it and operates as an absolute value in itself. Why "may" in: "Thus some institutions may prefer not to have ROTC programs"? Is this the permissive "may"? If so, on what basis is Parsons allowing "some institutions" (which ones?) not to have ROTC programs? If it is not a permissive "may" (I don't think it is), it is of course superfluous: some institutions simply *do* prefer not to have ROTC programs. Superfluous, but crucial: "may" and "seem" define "pluralism" as a mode of nonexistence, a system of ontological torpor in which the self drugs all human choices into a state of pure possibility.

In Parsons's world, the university is society's spiritual henchman, for it de-realizes what society does, thereby avoiding any judgment of the consequences of acts by translating acts into categories of classification. This is the sacred function which the sociologist invites us to protect: "Within the academic community itself," Par-

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sons continues, "the most important issue seems [!] to me to be the maintenance of the procedural norms that are so essential to the implementation of cognitive values." But the procedural norms *determine* the cognitive values to be implemented. (How many prominent American sociologists are still operating under the assumption that methods of investigation are ideologically neutral?). At any rate, Parsons makes it crystal clear that the aim of sociology is to preserve its procedures, and this is what you will find the writers in *Confrontation* and *Students in Revolt* tirelessly engaged in doing. (I make an exception of a few studies of foreign student movements in the latter book — although certainly not the one on China. The events of May 1968 in France, for example, clearly do more than excite A. Belden Fields's procedural glands.) The norms are occasionally made explicit, and then we find a familiar and, at first glance, unobjectionable ideological stance: having chosen to pursue truth dispassionately, the sociologists are objective, critical and skeptical; they admire expertise because truth is complex and therefore often difficult for nonexperts to find; and they need an atmosphere of tolerant, quiet debate ("open inquiry") in which to conduct their research.

What are some of the results of research outlined in the seven hundred pages of these two books? Much hard work in the field tells us that: the natural sciences contribute fewer student activists than the social sciences and the humanities; the Berkeley rebellion occurred in conditions where students led privileged lives; activists tend to come from middle-class families; the vulnerability of a university to demonstrations depends more on students' backgrounds than on the university environment itself; transfer students contribute disproportionately to the protesters' ranks. Lipset gets my prize for the most revealing conclusion: "In general, then, one should learn to expect a sharp increase in student activism in a society where, for a variety of reasons, accepted political and social values are being questioned, in times particularly when events are testing the viability of a regime and policy failures seem to question the legitimacy of social and economic arrangements and institutions."

Now except for this last quotation, which I can't help feeling contains information available without the aid of research, I certainly don't *mind* learning that student activists tend to come from middle-class backgrounds, etc. (Such information can also be extremely use-

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ful; I will say in a moment for whom.) But do we find skeptical, dispassionate objectivity in such investigations? Skepticism can be a devastating disposition of mind; I recommend to our sociologists a summer devoted to the reading of *Ecclesiastes* and the *Essays* of Montaigne. But how much skepticism is there in Lipset's description of "a back-lash opposition" (characteristic of "a kind of left-wing intellectual *Poujadisme*") "to the very conception of the utility of efforts at value-free objective scholarship in policy-relevant fields"? We are encouraged, in advance, to ignore a possible contradiction between "value-free" and "policy-relevant" by the value-charged way of referring to opposition to scholars working for the government: this opposition is a "back-lash," it is *"Poujadisme."* Furthermore, "utility" is an admirable way of begging the question: what Lipset's so-called *Poujadistes* are objecting to is, of course, not the utility of government-sponsored research (God knows it's useful), but rather its desirability *and* the possibility of its being "value-free."

The advantage of some of our sociologists' "procedural norms" is that they allow them to present prejudice as skepticism, commitment as detachment. The norms must be preserved not for the sake of "truth," but because they constitute the defenses of a system of intolerance. Lipset writes: "For those students inclined to the left — who knew not Stalin, the Hungarian Revolution, or the Berlin Wall — the Vietnam issue became defined in terms that placed American actions at odds with a basic democratic belief — the right to self-determination of politically weak peoples." How different this sentence would be without "who knew not Stalin, the Hungarian Revolution, or the Berlin Wall"! Are we not being asked to rephrase the sentence in order to get its true message? — that is: *"If* the students had known Stalin, they might *not* have defined Vietnam as at odds with a basic democratic belief." The awesome shrewdness of the sentence consists in a structural arrangement which presents the words designed to create an attitude as merely another piece of objective information in a series which includes the information about the students' attitude toward Vietnam: it is, after all, a *fact* that our students are too young to have "known" Stalin, etc. On the other hand, the sentence *wants* to denounce its own appearance and reveal itself as persuasive. The only element of personal "style" in the sentence is "knew not" instead of "didn't know" or "did not know." And this

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slight heightening of tone gives to the superficially parenthetical words a weight and a dignity which are meant to encourage us to understand their determinant value. We know what Lipset means without his having to say it; thus he ascetically deprives himself of the credit (or the responsibility?) for the birth of an idea which he has nonetheless implanted in our minds. The Immaculate Conception as a technique of propaganda.

With Lipset, the connection between Parsons's compulsively non-commital "seems" and sociology-in-the-service-of-the-powers-that-be becomes a trifle more explicit. We begin to see the specific political loyalties which save these sociologists from living uniquely in the eerie Parsonsian world of the unrealized Idea. They are not all as subtle as Lipset, although, if anyone would care to go on with my *explication de texte* method, I highly recommend Daniel Bell's fascinatingly slippery history of the Institute of Defense Analysis on pages 73–75 of *Confrontation*. Luckily, the dominant politics of these books is often spelled out much more directly. First of all, one is struck by the fact that the sociologists' procedural norms, which make such a large place for the free exchange of ideas, allows for so little range of opinion. We have opinion aplenty in *Confrontation* and *Students in Revolt,* but, especially in *Confrontation,* it all seems to come out on a barometer of more or less intense hostility to the radical forms of student activism. Independence of thought, like skepticism, can be a pretty scary thing — for the individual and for society — so why pretend to espouse it as a value if, like Edward Shils, you can only approve of local acts of rebellion within a pattern of conformity to the ideas and institutions of society as it exists? Shils, at any rate, makes his immense irritation with the young clear on every page of his essay, and I confess that that strikes me as a merit in these two volumes. Irving Kristol must, of course, get the highest rating in this respect, since he frankly recommends that "governmental authorities . . . step in and fill the power vacuum" created by "harassed administrators and preoccupied professors" who have weakly given in to "reforms sponsored by students . . . in the direction of removing their obligation to get any kind of education at all."

It's nice to have Irving Kristol around; he clarifies issues and commitments almost as refreshingly as Zbigniew Brzezinski, who, in such matters, has naturally set a rather high standard. I asked a

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while ago for whom such books as *Confrontation* and *Students in Revolt* are put together. Now they are obviously not for the general public: the tables, the professional jargon, the sheer boredom of the prose will keep them forever off the best-seller lists. They are certainly not addressed to the students they set out to study: if our young radical is anything like the portrait made by his social science professors in these essays, he will be too irresponsible, too impolite (Nathan Tarcov petulantly notes that the New Left had become "so convinced of the immorality of the war" in Vietnam that it even came to have contempt for "simple politeness"), too damned willfully ignorant to appreciate these enlightening studies of this origins and behavior. I see two possible audiences for these books. First of all, the sociologists will be read by themselves — a harmless enough pseudodialogue with which I'm familiar enough in the field of literary studies. It struck me, however, that the sociologists have the edge over us in audience appeal, since they would make very useful (if somewhat tough-going) reading for politicians in power. What could be handier than some reliable "laws" and statistics about the groups of students from whom revolt can be expected, the conditions under which revolt is likely to break out, the measures that have been most or least effective in keeping revolts under control?

True, the content of these sociologists' conclusions is often too idiotically vague to be of use even to the most zealous officer of the law (in his fourth Proposition concerning "conflict processes in universities," Frank A. Pinner discovers: "Students exhibit a special sensitivity and tendency toward conflict when issues of truth are involved"), but the procedural norms are ideally suitable for a passionless charting of the data indispensable for an operation of control. Pinner's other propositions condense observations about where protests are likely to take place and for how long; Richard E. Peterson gives "A Typology of American College Students for the Early 1970's" with, as he says, a "useful" chart which projects "how the types might be arranged on a continuum of degree of acceptance-rejection of prevailing American institutions." Peterson might also suggest the idea — to whom? — of breaking up our universities into small, politically ineffectual educational units. "The larger the student body is, the greater is the likelihood of there being some student who wishes to start something. . . ."

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Is it possible to spend one's life charting behavior patterns with no desire to *test* the patterns in experiments of behavior control? I don't know, but there is occasionally in these volumes a note of impatience with the weakness and inefficiency of established authorities in their responses to student activism. "Where authority abdicates," Shils writes, "through failure, ineptitude, and weakened self-confidence, it invites aggression against itself." Liberal governments "respect the freedom of expression; they legislate for the extension of welfare benefits and educational opportunity and submit to the insults and abuse directed toward them." How great is the distance between these superficially innocuous remarks and Brzezinski's criticism (in *The New Republic* for 1 June 1968) of the authorities for committing the "errors" of "procrastination," of "seeking refuge in legalistic responses" instead of "striking immediately and effectively" when "faced with a revolutionary situation"? When in doubt about your values, hit. Kristol's rationalization for his proposal that the government "step in and fill the power vacuum" in the universities is that "the citizens of this republic have a claim to assert that higher education is 'their' province, too. . . ." Such intervention would be "a huge injection of pluralism" into the educational system. But even if we grant that the *society* is pluralistic, the government most certainly is not. And the identification of the established authorities with "the citizens of this republic" (again, an interesting heightening of tone) is an extraordinary presumption. The government *is* the people, the Party *is* the people: how many times have we heard totalitarian governments make such claims? Repression for the sake of "freedom" and in the name of the "people." The seductiveness of that lie can be measured by the appeal it continues to exert even over some of those who pride themselves on having dramatically denounced it. And the illusion of being able to speak nonideologically creates an atmosphere of marvelous calm in which the government can be serviced with maximum efficiency. Parsons is right: the norms must be conserved at all costs, for they are the inheritance of that aberrant form of liberal humanism which soothes consciences and insures conformity by magically detaching "cognitive values" from that immersion in politics which is life.

Robert Paul Wolff also insists on "the primacy of the value of truth," but he is much less vague than his primary commitment

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might suggest, and *The Idea of the University* has many good proposals for university reform. Wolff recommends random admissions to college, a three-year undergraduate program with no degree at the end of it, and the replacement of the Ph.D. (and the Ph.D. dissertation) with "a professional degree designed to certify candidates as competent to teach their subjects at the college or graduate levels." Business and government would no longer demand the B.A. as a job prerequisite, and, since merit can obviously exist in people without a B.A., "quite possibly some of the sharp class lines which now divide America would begin to blur." Also, anyone, and not just holders of a bachelor's degree, could take the examinations and apply for admission to a graduate school. And graduate schools would drop the "*make-believe 'original contributions to scholarship'* " and, like the law and medical schools, prepare people for a professional career, that is, college teaching. Here is Wolff's summary of his proposals and their purpose: "by making high school performance irrelevant to college admission, by making college performance irrelevant to graduate admission, and by removing professional training from the undergraduate curriculum, we can transform competition and certification from a way of life into a limited activity directly related to the student's self-interest."

Wolff has great good sense, and his proposals deserve to be looked at more closely. He also sounds like a very decent man, and I share some of the feelings which probably help to explain why his book, in spite of some daring suggestions, remains conservative in principle: a pride in one's own academic achievements, a sentimental attachment to a few teachers and a stubborn sense of the superior intellectual atmosphere of Ivy League schools. But, in the context of what I've been talking about in this essay, his work sadly illustrates the futility of even radical proposals for university reform without more fundamental changes both of consciousness and in society. "In describing my proposals as 'practical,' I mean to indicate that they all fall far short of a revolution, either in education or in the economic and political organization of our society." But revolutionary changes in education and in social organization are clearly what is needed, and in not proposing such changes Wolff proposes little more than a postponement of the pressures and competitions which he sees as the corrupting factors in education now. Or rather, even

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the idea of postponing those pressures seems a fantastic one unless you propose the still more fantastic idea that the young can be kept unaware of the kind of society they are going to spend their lives in until that "single high-pressure year which comes *after* the student has left college" and during which he would be preparing for graduate and professional school admissions exams.

In a society characterized not merely by hierarchy, but by hierarchies in which one's place is determined by a more or less skillful suppression of "irrelevant" human resources, it is incredible that people would postpone their necessary self-mutilations until the age of twenty. What incentive would there be to spend three years completing "a critical stage of intellectual maturation" when other young people are (as Wolff would allow them to do) already working at jobs related to their future careers or busily taking courses only in related fields? Not to give credit for such courses would make very little difference: with or without credit, the early specializers would continue to have the advantage over the others on the market. Similarly, if "the elite [professional] jobs would still be won by those young men and women who either did—or showed promise of doing—original research," graduate students would have to be very foolish—Ph.D. thesis or no Ph.D. thesis—not to get on the research bandwagon as quickly as possible. What Wolff calls "unavoidable facts" of American society are the essential structures of that society, structures which, *because* they are pervasive economic ones, define the boundaries within which learning takes place as well as the procedures and substance of learning. Wolff's "practical proposals for Utopian reform" would indeed lead to a sort of Utopia: an ivy space of "intellectual maturation" sublimated from the social body. With the risk, of course, that the suppressed knowledge about social realities would make of youth a state of anguished suspense.

The most exasperating quality of the liberal mind is its apparent capacity for sympathy. An extraordinarily elastic imagination conceives and even approves of almost anything because its very elasticity protects it from the objects it sympathizes with. Sympathy and elasticity are the procedural norms *and* the values of the liberal imagination, and openness itself may require a constant closing of the door on any total claim on one's being. The condition for a permanent

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availability to the new is a permanent intolerance of the specific ways in which the new performs itself. No one confirms this better than Theodore Roszak in *The Making of a Counter Culture*. Am I being unjust? After all, Roszak not only gives perceptive and sympathetic summaries of the thinkers associated with the so-called counterculture (Brown, Marcuse, Goodman, Ginsberg); he also comes right out and attacks technocratic civilization and heartily defends that "reformulation of the personality," that effort, on the part of "beat–hip bohemianism . . . to work out the personality structure and total life style that follow from New Left social criticism."

If the glibness of "follow from" in this crucial and mysterious formula puts you on your guard, so much the better. First of all, Roszak's attack on what he calls "the myth of objective consciousness" is modishly moralistic and, intellectually, suspiciously superficial. (Compare his attack on the scientific mode of thought to Marcuse's critical analysis of the history of that thought since Aristotelian formalism in *One-Dimensional Man*.) The early sections of Roszak's book testify to his intelligence, and I wonder why he becomes so trite when he tries to describe what is being offered to us, in the way of radically new styles of life, by the young, by primitive peoples and by the thinkers he considers. "What *is* of supreme importance is that each of us should become a person, a whole and integrated person in whom there is manifested a sense of the human variety genuinely experienced, a sense of having come to terms with a reality that is awesomely vast." And "the primary purpose of human existence is not to devise ways of piling up ever greater heaps of knowledge, but to discover ways to live from day to day that integrate the whole of our nature by way of yielding nobility of conduct, honest fellowship, and joy."

Goodness gracious, is that what all the fuss is about? ask millions of reassured mothers and fathers, heaving a sigh of relief as they discover in their guerrillalike children the comforting tones of Norman Vincent Peale. But of course Roszak has very little use for the young. The "miserably educated" young "bring with them almost nothing but healthy instincts." Many of them have very "small" minds; they like Paul Goodman, but "to be sure, the depth and complexity of Goodman's thought deserve an audience of greater maturity." Roszak finds the music of the young "difficult to take," "much of it too brutally loud and/or too electronically gimmicked

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up." "A cry of the heart that is gentle and innocent" tends to get buried, in the underground publications, "amid the sheer smut and windy anger." The violent militancy of the New Left—whose "beauty . . . has always lain in its eagerness to give political dignity to the tenderer emotions"—is "depressing in the extreme. . . . At this point, things do not simply become ugly; they become stupid." (The familiar delicate order of priorities!) So much of what the young say is "mock-Dionysian frenzy," and certainly "a fretful cry for 'rationality' " on the part of the rest of us is to be expected. "How *is* one to make certain that the exploration of the non-intellective powers will not degenerate into a maniacal nihilism?"

"The matter needs sorting out . . . ," Roszak goes on to say, and certainly Roszak himself does a good job of sorting by keeping the young almost entirely out of his book and translating more intelligible older "thinkers" to the worried parent audience the book is obviously addressed to. And, within his own argument, Roszak's most subtle sorting out consists in what many of his readers will surely receive as a comforting separation of revolution from politics. We must "view much that goes by the name of social justice with a critical eye," recognizing that "even the most principled politics — the struggle against racial oppression, the struggle against world-wide poverty and backwardness" — can easily be exploited by the technocracy for its own aims. Perverting Marcuse's analysis of the established culture's fantastic capacity for digesting almost anything into its own system, Roszak would gently coax us into his intellectually finicky quietism. "It is as Chuang-tzu tells us," and the latter's message is summarized as "a political end sought by no political means." Listen to Chuang-tzu himself:

> The wise man, when he must govern, knows how to do nothing. Letting things alone, he rests in his original nature. If he loves his own person enough to let it rest in its original truth, he will govern others without hurting them. Let him keep the deep drives in his own guts from going into action. Let him keep still, not looking, not hearing. Let him sit like a corpse, with the dragon power alive all around him. In complete silence, his voice will be like thunder. His movements will be invisible, like those of a spirit, but the powers of heaven will go with them. Unconcerned, doing nothing, he will see all things grow ripe around him. Where will he find time to govern?

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It is nonsense to talk about nonpolitical behavior leading to political ends. Chuang-tzu's leader is as much a politician as any other leader, but his behavior *might* be effective only in a society so closely identified with his peculiar style of leadership that it has *already* made him a leader. His indifference is a strategy within his power. In the context of American society, this unconcerned, powerless vegetable would be simply a reactionary. Every style of life is politically significant, and much of what is most radical about the young today consists in their invention of new modes of political behavior. Jerry Rubin's appearance before the House Un-American Activities Committee with painted nipples is not frivolously apolitical; it is politically explosive. Roszak's distaste for militancy on the Left is the most explicit expression of his distaste for *everything* disruptive, even disruption that could be politically persuasive. He sentimentalizes the young by keeping his distance from them, and he reduces them to impotency by abstracting from their behavior concepts acceptable to the culture they are rebelling against: communion with nature, honest fellowship, gentleness. These words have always represented some of "our" ideals, and by now they mean almost nothing at all. While Roszak would like to think of these ideals as nonpolitical, they in fact are inescapably but innocuously political; revolutionary behavior is what he looks down on as political. This clever substitution of terms — nonpolitical for a sort of poeticized conformism, political for anything intransigently revolutionary — allows him both to reject revolution and to get credit for promoting it. Roszak is our best example of the critic's sympathy killing his text. The revolution he attributes to the young is his own support for the ethic of acquiescent gentleness they reject.

"The right wing," Jerry Rubin writes, "is the left wing's best ally." Is George Wallace dreaming of a dialogue with Rubin and Abbie Hoffman, with the Panthers, with the Weathermen? Obviously not; and what he offers the radical young is far more useful than a sympathetic ear. "The right wing are our theatrical directors," Rubin goes on to say. "They set high standards for us to fulfill, and we become giants trying to fulfill their fantasies. . . . We must become everything the *Daily News,* Birchers, Wallace, Buckley and your local right-wingers say we *are!*" How can liberal America's invita-

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tion to talk compete with the inspirational value of the Birchers' lurid fantasies?

The liberal strategy works best where it is superfluous. The teleology of discussion is compromise. Talk is effective when those talking share enough assumptions so that disagreements can be resolved within a field of agreement. The enormous agitation about the young today is justified only to the extent that they no longer exist within that field. Otherwise, there is really very little to worry about (or hope for . . .), no matter how violent the rhetoric of youth may be. The very willingness to listen on the part of the young invites us to relax in the midst of the sweaty, angry debate: we are all on the same team.

It's of course very difficult *not* to be on the team. The forms of co-option are numberless, and affect even those who, like Dotson Rader, have courageously protested with more than their signature. Compare Rubin's *Do It!* to Rader's *I Ain't Marchin' Anymore*. The latter's admirably lucid book may have worried some of his Columbia professors, but I don't see how any of them could help being proud of it. His portraits of New Left leaders are incisive; he subtly disengages the psychological appeal of violence (and the social compulsion toward it) from its political effectiveness; and, most irresistibly, he is both intense and ironic about his own involvement in the events at Columbia. He *explains himself* and his friends to us, and the disruptive nature of the demonstrations in which Rader has taken part is, in his book, subordinated to the reflective, introspective mood in which he now relates himself to them. *I Ain't Marchin' Anymore* is full of angry and moving protest, but the protest is part of a meditation, a remembrance of things past. In *Do It!*, the past is not an object of complex, "honest" analysis; it is a simplified scenario of future possibilities. Rader unmasks the symbolic nature of his behavior, while Rubin celebrates it.

As Rader's book illustrates, the sociologist's "procedural norm" of objective detachment easily becomes our culture's most effective intellectual device for preventing us from being detached from that culture. Rader's recent Feuerlike probing (in *Evergreen Review*) into the sexual identity problems of the Weathermen is only mildly surprising, given the analytical distance he first of all took from himself in *I Ain't Marchin' Anymore*. His self-mockery has, to be sure, a

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certain charm: in danger of being clubbed by the police at Columbia, he imagines himself years later "limping dramatically through Leftist assemblies, people awed and drunk with sweet pity — the Martyr! — as I, a one-man Abraham Lincoln Brigade, stumbled half-wittingly through the crowd, a Crippled Veteran of the Columbia Rebellion." Irony: our most civilized tactic for putting things back into place, for seeing them, as we say, in the proper perspective. These occasional self-exposures are devastating, not because Rader may have had such fantasies, but rather because he thinks them worthwhile reporting. To be willing to tell us these tiny secrets implies a perhaps not too tiny desire to be approved by us, and whenever Rader's sophistication about his naïveté gets the lead over his uncompromising anger, he is allowing us to forgive him for his "excesses" *and* to see those excesses as the comparatively harmless caper of a boy with rather conventional ambitions.

The humor in *Do It!* is of an entirely different order. Rubin is of course furiously anxious to get attention, and he is very unashamed and very funny about it, unlike Rader, who either presents his desire for more attention with self-deprecating irony or inflates that desire to a tragedy of American youth emasculated by neglect. Rubin gets a severe attack of "subpoenas envy" when he thinks that he hasn't been summoned, along with Hoffman, to appear before the HUAC. And his appearances there were revolutionary fashion shows. "In two months I had my same old political problem: What to wear to Congress?" The Congressional reaction to Rubin's costumes (when he came dressed as Santa Claus, he was barred from the hearing room) completely justify the word "political" here. And while Rubin naturally knows that his sartorial anxieties are comical, he also knows that they are potently realistic. The power of symbolic protest is confirmed by the violence of the reaction against it. For that protest, while it must of course include specific issues, is, more fundamentally, against nothing specific. It creates a new social theater, and, like all social theater, it "solves" the issues it raises by the manner in which it represents them. Finally, the yippie attacks the myth that communication is limited to dialogue; he would communicate, in a way not alien to some respected traditions of art, through insistent, offensive, militant seduction.

"To let the silence in is symbolism." Having ceased to have fixed, single meanings, experience may open out into a field of shift-

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ing symbolic exchanges of significance. It may seem peculiar to apply this formula from Norman O. Brown's *Love's Body* to the noisy Rubin, but I think that the noise interrupts the speech of American life in order to create a margin of silence in which competing speeches may be heard. "Freedom in the use of symbolism," Brown also writes, "comes from the capacity to experience loss." The sickness of an individual and of a society can perhaps be measured by the extent to which they impose upon symbolic objects the burden of permanently fixed identities. "Bad" symbolism is either archetypal (dematerializing and antierotic) or, in the opposite direction, erotically fetishistic. In the latter case, we are represented absolutely by our objects, our manners and our institutions. Any shift in symbolic equivalences becomes an intolerable loss if, unable to accept loss and death, we confer on things the magical power to immortalize our absent selves. Fetishism is terrifying in that we equate losing a part with loss of the whole, but the terror is "compensated" for in the fantasy that we possess the whole as long as we preserve — and sacralize — the symbolic literalism of the part.

Do It! is a contemporary manual for turning away from that sickness, and Rubin and Hoffman are our exuberantly stoned, if nearly martyred, healers. America gives Hoffman the license to vituperate America on TV, but it electronically erases the American flag he wears as a shirt. To say that a flag does not have to be symbolic of certain loyalties is of course absurd; what Hoffman does, and what we apparently are unable to take, is to remove the flag from its pole. He is testing our capacity for loss: will the nation collapse if it expands its identity by playing with a symbol of its identity? There is some reason to believe that it will, and so we cling all the more desperately to the fetishistic habits — allegiance to the flag and to some abstract, permantly inaccessible truth — which petrify our experience in mechanized rituals and fantasies of intellectual salvation. And the men I began by speaking of would help us to keep out of our lives the subverting, depetrifying silences by teaching us to speak every form of protest in the same deadeningly reductive language of so-called critical analysis.

The fantastic optimism of *Do It!,* which records incidents of boisterous silencing, is of course the very spirit of Rubin's revolutionary style; it testifies to his power to disrupt what is established in a manner which contains what is desired. It would be nice to think

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of that optimism also as a prognosis. But I don't feel that the nature of Rubin's theater itself (not to speak of the nature of American society) justifies that leap. I'm not, however, particularly bothered by the touchingly simpleminded vision of Rubin's postrevolutionary world in the final pages of *Do It!* It would be unfair to read the rest of the book as symbolic scenarios and then to treat the pastorally freaked-out Utopia evoked at the end as a seriously literal program of social organization. The very frivolity of Rubin's vision defines its value, which is to evoke an enthusiasm and delight necessary to *start* working for a world which will certainly not realize the dreams that may have inspired it. The yippie festivals and the yippie dreams serve the same function as the hippie commune. They impractically but therapeutically enact styles of life which, at least as total commitments, are impossible options for modern society. But the perhaps self-sacrificial actors in these celebrations embody resources in the rest of us which almost everything else in society today has trained us to think of as completely unusable. The commune, for example, can therefore be thought of as an irrelevant performance which may inspire us to invent *some* relevance for the satisfactions of small, almost primitive communities in the giant network of sophisticated technology which will of course determine more and more what "community" means in modern societies.[1]

What I find troubling in Rubin's book can be pinpointed in the evasive mysteriousness of the "it" in his title. It's by no means true that all yippie performances imitate rightist fantasies of them, but some of them do, and a good deal of the yippie rhetoric (of the kind I quoted at the beginning of this section) encourages us to "live up" to those fantasies. What is the rationale of this apparent perversity? For Rubin, George Wallace explicitly expresses the attitudes obscured by the pietistic language of democratic liberalism. That is, Wallace's speech is an adequate metalanguage in which to reformulate Eugene McCarthy's speech. Only the rightists spell out the boundaries of the liberal imagination: they *advocate* what liberals

[1] A recent example of some continuity between Utopian vision and social reality has been the militantly antibureaucratic spirit in European trade unions, the revolt against union leaderships — revolts which make socially concrete the French students' "unrealistic" cries in 1968 for self-management and participatory democracy.

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implicitly accept given the limited nature of their protests against American society. Rubin's version of this may strike us as a crudely reductive view of liberal politics. The complicity between liberal capitalism and repressive government is neither a new nor an easily dismissable idea, and it certainly deserves more serious attention than Rubin cares to give to the subject. At any rate, I find Rubin's own position here less important than the self-criticism which such connections, convincingly made, might promote in the liberal mind.

But Rubin is not just asking liberals to be more reflective in *Do It!* A primary purpose of that part of the radical strategy which consists in enacting the rightist scenarios of radical strategy is to make the liberals begin speaking — and acting — like the rightists. The shaky assumption behind such tactics is that they themselves are nonhistorical and nonpolitical. That is, Rubin and, more dangerously, those on the Left who directly promote violence, think of themselves merely as catalysts (they bring out the essential properties of liberalism), whereas they are in reality part of a historical sequence and therefore help to create the alignments they think of themselves as merely unmasking. The ultimate purpose of living out right-wing fantasies may be to eliminate politics altogether, to transform history into a scenario of static confrontations. Rubin's is an old-fashioned aesthetic which defines theater as the distribution of permanently fixed roles. From this perspective, such acts as bomb-throwing need no justification other than that of creating what the bomb-throwers have already defined as appropriate poses. The ineffable satisfaction felt by some radicals at having made a liberal take the pose of a rightist is a natural consequence of their indifference to time. In a truly alarming form of this indifference, our most radical fringe entertains the extraordinary dream of a reign of fascistic terror finally awakening the flowers of goodness in the human soul, as if fascism could be simply another catalyst with no harmful effects of its own on the society that would presumably rebel against it.

The exuberant mockery of petrified symbolism is liberatingly critical. Rubin, however, is also tempted by the slavish enactment of what his enemies enjoy thinking he is like. He runs the risk of putting himself in the politically sterile position of imitating rather than exposing a metalanguage—and his title invites us to imitate his flamboyant imitations of what he has taken to be the profound Amer-

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ican speech. To shock the country into an awareness of the illiberal assumptions which may support its liberal rhetoric is a politically radical act only if the strategy of shock underlines the *gap* between the two. The purpose of radical criticism should be to encourage a rejection of the complicities which such criticism uncovers. The danger from our extreme Left is that its supposed exposure of those complicities will, on the contrary, appear to justify the language of the Right. Liberalism is challenged to prove that it cannot be reduced to the ideology of the Birchers when it is confronted with political behavior which it may find uncongenial but which can be rationally defended as behavior made imperative by the proclaimed goals of liberalism itself. But the responsibility for a possible liberal backlash rests at least partly with those against whom it is directed when the latter legitimize a right-wing nightmare. The forms of resistance — including even armed resistance — are surely more varied than that. The enactment (rather than the critical exposure) of a metalanguage of intolerance "belongs" to an intolerant society. The critics of that society become its allies when, however desperately the jump may be taken, they seek to contest its rigidity and its violence by bringing about new opportunities for rigidity and violence.

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FIVE PIECES by W. S. Merwin

THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

In a rich provincial city there is a museum as imposing and quite as large as any in the capital. The facade is immense and the portico dwarfs the visitor, seeming to fill the space between his usual size and his shrunken self with an echo. The style of the building is not obviously contemporary, though it could have been produced by no other age. It manages to suggest, with its general proportions, high columned halls and open airy courts surrounded by enormous arcades, an entire classical tradition in which temple and palace are never completely distinguishable from each other. The approach to the building is lined on either side with marble pedestals, each of them empty. Across the top of the main portal there is a large panel for a name or inscription. It is blank.

The museum is referred to, in the literature supplied by the chamber of commerce, as The Permanent Collection — the gift of an anonymous donor. The terms of the donor's will stipulated that there should be no other designation. But publications for which the city administration cannot be held accountable reveal that the museum was the bequest of a local millionaire whose forbears, through several generations, had played a dominant role in the exploitation of that region. The name is common in those parts, on streets, banks, office buildings, bridges, housing developments, foundations. But the family — at least the direct line for which these have all been named — has died out. The last of the line was the builder and donor of the museum.

In his youth, according to the local historians, he had fallen in love with the daughter of another wealthy household, at a northern

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resort where both dynasties had summer houses. Only one portrait of her is known to have survived. It shows the girl at the time when they first met — already beautiful: slender, dark-haired, her expression gentle, delicate, remote. She had pretended not to notice his early, clumsy suit. During the first winters her name was coupled with one boy after another from the same schools which he attended. But one summer, perhaps out of mere indolence, she had paid him more attention, or at least had spent more time in his company than before, and their families had come to take the relation between them for granted — though neither of the young people did so. They were spoken of for a winter or so almost as though they were engaged. Between the assumption, which he met on all hands, of his future with her, and the secret barrenness of his hopes, he became aware of an abyss that would swallow everything he knew.

During college he had seen as much as possible of a succession of other girls. He had even formed attachments with several of them, lasting for a matter of months. But she was the one whom he tried not to want, and the longing for her grew with him. He proposed to her before he left college and she listened to him quietly and told him she wanted to wait. Then she had gone abroad with her family and he was not surprised when, shortly after their return, he received an announcement of her engagement to someone else.

They had continued to see each other, occasionally. She had had a daughter. He too had married — twice, once hilariously, both times disastrously. He had had no children.

Her marriage too had ended in divorce, after fifteen years. Her husband spent his summers on his own estate, and her daughter was sent to be with him in June. She herself had returned to visit her family, in the northern resort. There she had seen her former suitor again. There had been a second courtship, to which he deliberately imparted an air of casual urbanity that was as contrived — on his part — as the stillness of the breath above a triggerfinger. It worked. They were married during the following winter. Nothing is known of their life together. Outwardly it was placid. She died a year later, while swimming.

The entrance to the museum is guarded by wardens in plain dark uniforms without metal buttons or insignia of any kind. Inside the main portal is a vast hall, with another marble pedestal in the

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center, catching the light. It is empty, like those outside. In the walls on either side are tall niches, also containing nothing. Guards in the same featureless uniforms stand in pairs at each doorway, and at intervals along the corridors and in the arcades. There is a prescribed order for visiting the rooms, and the guards point the way.

And in each room there are more of the large pedestals, without statues or names. In some, besides, there are glass display cases, of different shapes and sizes, empty, and picture frames containing blank canvas on the walls. All along the arcades there are empty niches and pedestals, alternating, and in each of the courtyards there is an empty fountain. No one talks. It takes well over an hour to make the tour of the rooms and step out into the world again on the same side as the entrance but farther along. From there one leaves by another walk flanked by empty pedestals. The donor lived to see the building completed, but the public was admitted only after his death.

Why did he want the visitors at all? Could he have foreseen those who come out from the building with a sigh of relief and a joke, or with a burst of indignation at the abuse of wealth or at the enormity of his egoism — or with a yawn, a glance at a watch, a suggestion about eating? Could he have foreseen those who emerge from time to time in silence, with their faces shining?

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THE HOURS OF A BRIDGE

When the black.

When the lamps fill, when the lamps empty.

When a prayer. With no one praying it. Oh yes there is someone but they are hanging back, hanging back. All through the darkness. In the daytime they are nothing but a long gasp. When a prayer they let the prayer go ahead by itself and they hang back and become deserted.

When a prayer again. No shoes running after it with a limp. Or is that the prayer? No stars. Above or below. And still long long before.

When a rat. When a flag. A long flag.

When the battle will cross. But that will be by its own light. Between the smug statues.

When the sins of the night, in a butcher's cart. The same cart that is used for the plagues. A dog painted on the side. A dog walking under it. Mist walking on each side. The wheels and the cart and the dogs and the mist and the sins all unaware of each other.

When the man with the red hood that looks black. Going home.

When the battle will cross again, coming back. When the statues will all become statues of the death of the air.

When the dawn's cat. Sits right down. By a coat, getting light.

When the coat is disturbed water runs out of it. Old water. Old old water.

But the best thing for us, we believe, is to go on for as long as we can, living upstream, tending our instruments by night. On the one bank.

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MEMORIALS

One after the other, if they are not wholly lost, our intentions, unless they started that way, turn into legends. On the other side of their effects we walk on, thinking we know. And they, whom we continue to address and refer to as though their presence were something that we understood perfectly and could take for granted, leave us without our so much as noticing. Yes, sometimes most of them will be gone at a time, while our activities continue without them. And then they will return across great distances, like the influences of planets, and even when they are reborn in something very like the old forms it is probable that we will not recognize them, any more than we did the last time. It is this aspect of existence that — without our meaning it — our monuments commemorate.

After each war the men from the memorial companies tour the little towns. On their arrival the custodians of the locally accepted intentions welcome them. These neighborhood officials, thoroughly rehearsed, impress themselves once again, in a manner that has acquired its own rough ritual, with the superstitions that they now believe were the intentions (including their own) underlying the recent conflict, and with the feelings which, in consequence, they had encouraged themselves to profess. They are scrupulously mindful of what they take to be the intentions of their neighbors, hereby to be commemorated — the grief of widows and bereaved mothers, the proud and vengeful wrath of fathers, the as yet undeveloped but indubitable gratitude of children. Insofar as their combined means will allow — and this is not something over which any of them would wish to be sparing, or would admit to such a wish if he felt it — they want an object that will express all of these things clearly, changelessly and in perpetuity. In this spirit they approach the latest catalogs.

Also they have piously in mind what they take to have been the intentions of the young men who went away and died. Quite as much — more so —than the actual features of their faces (though

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they have not ruled out a hope, of course, of finding a happy resemblance, and with this in view, rather than trust their pathetic memories they come provided with photographs collected from the bereaved but supposedly proud households). Furthermore, the intentions with which these youths are presumed to have faced the fatal conflict, or confronted death itself when it stood before them, must also be represented. The catalogs are limited, naturally, and such individual matters are now beyond verification. Something at last is chosen which is felt to be, within the practical limitations, suitably sad and suitably noble, to commemorate all of these fictions.

And the result, for heaven knows how many years afterwards, graces the little square in all weathers, with the names on its base and the war in which they were called meaning less and less to more and more people. Familiarity and the symmetry of its surroundings before long set about making the object itself grow dim. What it evokes, in a while, to many of those who see it, both natives and strangers, is the boredom of the square, the elusiveness of meaning, the anonymity in which the names, even of the living, are ghosts, the delusions of others, at times even a shifty levity, and at times an uncomprehended and unmentioned fear.

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THE BAPTIST'S SINGERS

Each time the varnish of the carriage fills me with a profound but unexpected delight such as rises from the sudden recollection of something loved in childhood and long forgotten. The luster of the varnish is so deep that it appears to have its own source of light, which moves under the surface, approaches, fades, divides and comes together and disappears according to a pleasure of its own. The motions of the light bear witness to something in the nature of the carriage, and to some appearances of the world that it passes, but however closely they are watched, their play looks as though it were independent of both. And I realize each time, when it is too late, that the motions of the light in the varnish have so captivated me that I cannot say with any certainty what color the varnish is. I know it is dark. Some opalescent shade scarcely distinguished from black. But not black. And on the side of the carriage, in an arc like a rainbow's, are the words THE SINGERS, in blue letters edged with little flames of green and gold, and under them is a painting of John the Baptist standing thigh-deep in the sky blue Jordan.

The horses are dark too, but not black, and their wine red harness, and the carriage itself, stream with white ribbons tied in little bows.

In the carriage the four singers face each other: two women, one young and pale, the other with a darker complexion and heavy features, both of them in the wide bonnets of another time, both of them in long gloves, with which they hold their stringed instruments. They are riding backwards. Across from them a portly man in a tall hat and a ginger coat, and a boy in black velvet, are sitting, the boy holding a flute. All four of them appear to be laughing merrily at their own conversation. Their heads nod, but nothing can be heard.

The footman raises the long coach horn but if he blows it I cannot hear it. The coachman in his dark coat drives on, slowly, and the carriage moves on as smoothly as a barge. The blue wheels

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turn on the glassy surface of the road, where rain has just fallen. The carriage glides along on its reflection, the blue wheels spinning above and below, making no mark where they touch, and then very slowly the wheels begin to sink into their reflections. The rims disappear. The wheels above and below share a lost segment that grows like the rising of an invisible sun. And now the footman is surely blowing his long gleaming horn, but there is not a sound to be heard as the carriage sinks into itself, and the feet of John the Baptist meet, stand on each other, and are washed away, and the Jordan is swallowed up in the Jordan, and the singers in the singers. Only a piercing silence rises from both coach horns, and continues to echo long after they themselves are out of sight.

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KNIVES

Around us hangs a curtain like rain. Around us, spirits of salt waiting for our griefs to release us. We cannot touch the curtain. It hangs in front of the days and the nights, the sun and the earth. It wears us away but we believe we would be nothing without it. Or if not nothing, then naked. Our spirits scarcely speak. Could they pass through the curtain without us? Have we no others? We look out and see nothing, through the curtain, but uses.

We look at the knives, those gentle creatures, many of them older than we are. We see only the service we ask of them — separation, separation, and pain. Without which, as we say, we would be nothing. So we never see those meek faces themselves, moving in a world upon which they open no eyes at all, about which they know nothing, and of whose savageries they have become a symbol. They who eat nothing, who do not even defend themselves against the dew, against rust, against any of the bearers of loss, and who make no sound, except an occasional clear note like the calling of a bird, when they have been struck, or abraded with a stone. They who will obey any guide.

Through the curtain we look at them shining quietly on the wall and we are nudged by a vision of a bloody shore.

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THE WEATHERVANE AND THE PENDULUM

The pieces by Leo Bersani and Peter Brooks in this issue are quite impressive. Bersani's is extremely sophisticated in its handling of critical ideas, and Brooks's is very effective in its candor and open-mindedness, and its sensitivity to the tone of events. One must admire both as writers and agree with much they say, particularly with their criticism of those who use what is wrong with the New Left to justify stand-pat views. But because their pieces raise some vital political questions so clearly and on so high a level, they provide a polemical occasion for arguing about them. It should be emphasized that the debate is not primarily with either Brooks or Bersani, though it has been convenient to use their remarks to get at the issues themselves.

Behind both pieces are certain assumptions common to many liberals and radicals today. At the risk of overgeneralizing, it might be said that both pieces seem to assume, as Trotsky once said, precisely that which has to be proven, and that both pieces lack a political center, a political identity. In this respect, they are like weathervanes pointing the way the wind blows but lacking a position of their own. For both Bersani and Brooks assume that Hoffman and Rubin and the Panthers — and by implication all the most militant and violent figures and groups on the Left — represent in some absolute, unquestionable way *"The Revolution"* and *"The New Society."* Hence Brooks's and Bersani's concern is not so much to evaluate the new politics as to appreciate it. There is some criticism, but it is minor, as when Bersani questions whether it makes political sense for Hoffman to try to live up to what he calls the fantasy of the Right about the Left, or when Brooks observes the similarity between the free-floating radical schemes cropping up in New Haven and those described by Flaubert in 1848. And while Bersani pulls back at the end of his piece from his earlier enthusiasm for Hoffman and Rubin, he doesn't resolve the conflicts in his attitude toward them.

On the whole, Bersani's and Brooks's articles reflect many prevailing "revolutionary" attitudes. For example, Bersani tends to put down the entire liberal tradition and he echoes the currently fashionable idea of the "complicity of liberal capitalism with fascism," reminiscent of the theory of "social fascism" popular in the thirties — an ironic throwback to the old politics by the intransigents of the new politics. And Brooks suggests throughout his piece that he is uneasy with and ashamed of his own liberal impulses. Brooks also talks of taking sides, as though there were only two: the side of the Panthers and the side of the ineffectual, timid, pusillanimous liberals. Actually, he takes the Panther posture at face value: when he says that the guilt or innocence of the defendants has nothing to do with the real issue; when he talks about the Panthers' coercive tactics, explaining that they are part of the Blacks' and our own "existential condition"; and when he simplifies the rather complex question of the role of the university, citing the Panther who said the revolution needs the university and the university is in the revolution. Similarly, Bersani dismisses Roszak as having no taste for "militancy" and "disruption," as though it were self-evident that such a taste was the key to

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radical thinking. Also, when he takes down those who "keep a distance" from the young, are we to infer that the only thing to do is to dissolve oneself in some ideal radicalism, found mostly in youth? In his analysis of Rubin, Bersani speaks of him as being "politically explosive" without considering that he might be also politically ineffectual or harmful to the radical cause. Nor does he consider that Rubin — and Hoffman — might even be unpolitical yet have a political effect.

In fact, for both Brooks and Bersani there has been a suspension of what is normally considered to be political thinking. And this, it seems to me, is because their approach is primarily literary, not political. They both talk about meaning and metaphor and symbol and style and theater and language. Brooks uses esoteric terms like "tenor" and "vehicle," which one associates with the special vocabulary of John Crowe Ransome and the so-called New Critics. He goes so far as to say "we didn't possess the forms for dealing with what we were facing . . . That was perhaps one definition of a revolutionary situation" — a definition transplanted from avant-garde literary criticism and not very useful for assessing the strength of a political system or the forces challenging it. Similarly, the question of violence which radical theory has always treated as a tactic — and usually rejected until the situation was ripe for it — becomes for Brooks a matter of essence, "ingrained in American society," and hence a genre of permanent radical activity. Such an approach naturally reduces substantive issues to stylistic ones. And it is essentially the "style" of Hoffman and Rubin to which Bersani is drawn, as though it were some model radical style, particularly for the young. This is, of course, a legitimate expression of taste, but, unfortunately political taste of this kind often indicates a political opinion, though neither Brooks nor Bersani seem willing to face up to this — any more than those conservatives and liberals who express their politics by a distaste for the style of the Left will admit to an aesthetic reading of politics.

The trouble with substituting literary criticism for politics is that it overvalues literature and undervalues politics. And while it makes us aesthetically sympathetic to new movements it leaves us without a political center of our own, thus converting us into automatic fellow-travelers of anything new, wild and exciting. Unlike literature, politics has to be more than shocking; it has to be persuasive and effective. The fact that accepted politics is often insane doesn't justify craziness in the opposition. We should, for example, examine the Panthers' doctrines as well as their style. One also has to ask whether Abbie's liberating antics don't have more to do with prudery than with politics, and whether the system really trembles when he takes off his shirt on television.

As things are today, Bersani's and Brooks's openness is certainly more attractive and more useful than the smugness of those who make a principled attack on the new nonsense in the name of the old nonsense. But this might not be enough. For the weathervane may not be much more reliable than the pendulum.

W. P.

(Replies and comments will appear in future issues. Readers are invited to participate.)

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Peter Brooks

PANTHERS AT YALE

HERMENEUTICS

The problem throughout the weeks was centrally one of meaning. That sounds academic and even somewhat frivolous, yet the question couldn't be avoided at any point: did what was happening have any *signification?* There was always stored somewhere in the mind the possibility that all might be a gratuitous and slightly hysterical psychodrama created out of the students' fears, the blacks' manipulations of those fears, the liberals' lack of analytical power and general flabbiness. You had to keep stopping to ask yourself if you weren't simply caught up in a rhetorical flourish, self-indulgent and destructive. Creating meaning was difficult, and there are many who decided that it didn't exist: Alexander Bickel in *The New Republic,* for instance, and Robert Brustein in the *Times* magazine, both have implied that the crisis was unreal, hysterical, a non-sense that could have been willed away by steely analytical intellects. This explains in part why the concrete preparations for May Day were a relief from anxiety. And it also suggests why so many faculty members who were confused and in retreat during the whole Panther affair greeted Cambodia with a sense of relief in their outrage: here was the real thing again, the clear issue, the stance more easily taken. Before that, the stances were hard to take and hard to explain. On the strike, for example: Why are you striking? To free the New Haven Nine? No, though a few believe that, clearly it is an absurdity, and a strike would be counterproductive even if you are so naïve as to think the trial could be halted. To demonstrate concern for the rights of the defendants? Yes, in part, but here again a strike is ill-adapted to the ends. Or: Why are you striking against the university to dem-

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onstrate your concern over a criminal trial taking place in the superior court of New Haven? We're not striking against the university; it only looks that way. We are calling for a halt to business as usual in order to discuss the issues posed by the trial, and Yale's relation to it, and beyond that, our relation to racism and to the oppression of Blacks in New Haven and America. We can't carry forward business as usual when the fact of the existence of the Panthers, and what is being done to them across the country, has so forcibly been put before us and tied to the lives of Blacks in the community just outside Yale's walls and to the existential predicament of those who are both Blacks and Yale students. The connections are all there, but you must constantly rearticulate them.

It was partly a problem in symbolism and metaphor. This I could understand by the contrast to Paris in May 1968. You wondered about the measure of gratuitousness there, too, but only in terms of the depth of reality that the struggle had outside the students' universe. The movement's content was defined, or at least delineated, by its symbolism. The barricades (useless, of course, except in defining the students' turf and their heroic solidarity against the "forces of order," as the French so conveniently call them), the red and black flags, singing *L'Internationale,* marching to the symbolic places — *Le Figaro*'s offices, those of the state television — even the less purely political, more liberationist side of the struggle: the graffiti, the surrealist carnival of the Sorbonne, the "soviets" established within the university — all these had historical referents in past revolutionary movements, and because of this reference, all the gestures were clearly metaphors of revolution. Which is not to call them frivolous gestures: how, if not through metaphor, are you going to approach any new state of being? Metaphor as a reference from the known to the ineffable, the unseeable or the imperfectly expressible, is a first move in revolution. As God to Dante is three rings of light, so: *"Groupons et demain/ L'Internationale/ Fera le genre humain."* It is a metaphor oriented toward the future, which seeks its point of literal identity of tenor and vehicle in the future. And when the metaphors are not only linguistic, but in terms of styles of acting, like the student soviets, they permit what Cohn-Bendit called the "glimpse of a possibility," a momentary knowledge of the new which vanishes, but leaves you with the conviction that it could in fact be.

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We don't have any of the metaphors, and because we don't, "revolution" is literally *inconceivable* in this country. There are countercultural life-style metaphors — levitating the Pentagon, putting the New Haven courthouse on the moon (Abbie Hoffman) — but they don't yet have any revolutionary consistency. The only language that has that consistency is from the Black culture: it carries true menace when it breaks through into consciousness. *"Right On"* and *"Power to the People"* are the most intense and sharp revolutionary language this country has produced in recent history. Yet you can't use them. You feel like a fool shouting *"Power to the People,"* or at least you should. The students tried it, but those with any awareness found it couldn't be done. It belongs to the Panthers, not to us. Try talking about "pigs." The Yale students discovered this at a remarkable moment in a mass meeting, when Panther David Hilliard was haranguing them and said it was all right to shoot pigs because pigs weren't real people. The students booed him. This was a stupid reaction, because they should have regarded Hilliard's statement not as a stump speech but as a display of psychic wounds, yet it showed a coming to awareness about the threat of that language when it burst forth from the enclave into a larger political context.

I'm not arguing, as Robert Brustein did when during the strike we held a forum on "Language and Revolution," that *"Off the Pigs"* and *"Power to the People"* are euphemisms like "The Final Solution" which dehumanize and pervert people through perversion of language. I think he was confusing euphemism and metaphor. The Panther phrases are the metaphor of argot, a secret language designed to identify members of a group and intensify their communication through exclusion of anyone outside their circle. Whereas euphemism is a kind of public metonymy, a way of avoiding naming the reality you are talking about, an avoidance which is accepted by all to sidestep confrontation with what things really are. The "Language and Revolution" forum brought this out, in confused and halting form, mostly in the audience's reactions to Brustein. They felt that the language of a subculture had burst into their consciousness, and that this fact of itself had revolutionary import. Much of what was going on at Yale had to do with this bursting into consciousness and the effort to define one's relationship to that language. The language, and your problem of what to do with it, posed the question: whose revolution? Both ours and not ours, with us and against us, exhilarating and threatening.

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I can understand the Bickel-Brustein position. I was at moments in it myself and could lapse back into it easily. I could write, "the whole crisis was fearful enough but had no real meaning," and believe myself momentarily. But any definition of meaning which excludes the Yale crisis from the field of its application is clearly "academic" in the worst sense. Because the other thing that you felt was that the forces at play were very real, so real that you couldn't handle them. I remember the faces of some of the girls in one of my classes a few days before May 1: an image of uncomprehending concern and compassion, of wanting to be right and useful yet with a sense that one couldn't help, that the forces coming to bear were more than anyone could handle. The tension was too great; a cataclysmic rendezvous of American society seemed in preparation, and Yale, par excellence the naïve liberal institution if one of the most enlightened and communitarian, could not survive such a rendezvous. I don't want to exaggerate: certainly there was some loss of perspective, some inflation of the Armageddon imagery as the world shrank to the dimensions of one city and one day. Yet even when you sought to cleanse yourself of melodrama, the rendezvous, the convergence of intensely charged forces seemed undeniable. A conclusion that none of it made sense, that it was all hysteria and manipulation, really meant that you chose to draw a hermeneutic line that you, as a university person, could not cross. The only other course was to say that you couldn't understand, that Yale couldn't deal with it, but that unless you were going to erect and maintain a Maginot Line — which in the most specific terms would mean not accepting any significant number of inner city Blacks at Yale — you had to learn. There were vast amounts of white guilt, of course, but it was more than that: not simply a giving in to white guilt, passive surrender and lambs to slaughter because in the deeper analysis all the lambs are guilty, but a conquest of the whole American imagery of blackness and its terrors. T. S. Eliot in *Little Gidding:* "History is now and England." History was now and New Haven, and just because you didn't like it and couldn't handle it, it wouldn't go away.

CONSCIOUSNESS

The Panthers had begun to bring their case to Yale some weeks before. Quietly and diplomatically, they had expounded their case and raised money among some left-liberal faculty. At the same time, the Panthers Defense Committee, centered on the white radical col-

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lective led by Tom Dostou and some Yale dropouts began a more strident "Save Bobby" campaign. On April 13, the Trial came to Yale as Dostou and Panthers Doug Miranda, Elbert ("Big Man") Howard and Artie Seale, and William Kunstler and (later that day) Jean Genet spoke in Woolsey Hall. The triggering point came the next day, when David Hilliard and Emory Douglas, two Panther leaders, were given six-month contempt of court sentences for a minor infraction of courtroom decorum. The evening of April 15, 400 students met to consider what was to be done. The atmosphere at times bordered on hysteria. Someone proposed that students really lay their lives on the line: that 100 volunteers step forward, that one of them be shot in public every day until Bobby Seale went free. The motion that was eventually voted — half a million dollars from the Yale Corporation to the Panther Defense fund — apparently was, in the context of the meeting, a moderate demand. A four-day moratorium on classes was also voted. And the fact of the May Day demonstration was brought to Yale's attention for the first time.

I hadn't been at that meeting. When I walked into my morning class on the sixteenth, I borrowed a student's copy of the *Yale Daily News* and ran over the story of the meeting quickly, with a sense that the demands were demagogic and ludicrous — which was evidently the paper's point of view too.

I was well into a discussion of Nerval's *Sylvie*. I called on a student who had raised his hand. He began talking in English, a violation of ground rules. So a change of language was the first gesture to light up the "disruption" sign. "I'm not a political activist," he began, "but I think we have to talk about the Panthers." Many people were disturbed by what was going on, many were scared. Yale was involved by its proximity, whether it liked it or not. Academic business as usual had to stop in order to face this reality. As I leaned back against the blackboard and listened, I was a little tense. Tense because of the category, "classroom disruption," which I hadn't yet faced, but which no teacher cannot have thought about over the past years. I knew that, beyond the challenge to the "relevance" of French Romantic literature, there was a challenge to the whole life-style of the academic, to someone who could talk about old books in a classroom while Blacks were dying in the streets; the class was waiting to see how I would perform. So when I answered him — in English, which was already the acceptance of a new

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frame — I told him that his opposition was a false one, that I saw no conflict between my class and concern for the Panthers, that a mature person had always to bear multiple commitments, that if we were to build a new world, he could learn something about it from attention to Nerval. I had to get that much said. Then we talked about the Panthers.

Our debate was all about the possibility of a fair trial. It came through to me — as it had begun to do with the Chicago Conspiracy trial — how much my generation had been determined by the Warren Court, how much we looked to the judicial branch as our best guarantee of existential freedom in a country with so many pressures to unfreedom. A younger generation of radicals had no such image of the courts. At their worst, they made no distinction between John Mitchell and the presiding judge in New Haven, seeing them as part of the same infernal machinery. I argued with them; I was and still am an example of what Tom Hayden would call the fair-trial hangup, in that I couldn't conclude that "the facts" were irrelevant. But I too had to admit radical skepticism about the Panthers receiving a fair trial. The actions of the police and the FBI had created a pattern of nationwide repression that automatically subverted justice; the original sin was theirs. How, at the very least, could an unbiased jury be put together? And how could any verdict rendered on Bobby Seale not seem political to some part of America? The institution began to look inadequate to the problem. This discrepancy would be replayed in many forms in the days to come.

By the end of the class, it was apparent to me that the faculty should act, should at least express its concern and give it a form that could usefully channel energies and fears. There happened to be a Yale College faculty meeting that afternoon. When we finally got through other business to the crisis, two proposals were made: a resolution whereby the faculty affirmed its concern for the constitutional rights of the defendants, another establishing a Yale watchdog committee on the trial. Neither was voted: they seemed too much in violation of university neutrality. This simply to give a measure of how far consciousness would progress in the next week.

There followed a weekend of intense if somewhat undirected activity for those faculty who thought that something should be done,

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that silence was the worst stance. We learned that President Brewster would make a statement on Sunday afternoon, and we sent representatives to him, urging that it be a strong one. At one meeting, on Saturday morning, in the midst of a fairly heated discussion, one of the Black faculty members suggested that everything would be transformed if the Black students called for a strike. The notion seemed to me absurd. I couldn't see what a strike would accomplish for them, and I couldn't see any sense in its symbolism. But it was increasingly clear that the Black students were the key element in the situation. I had long realized that the only real possibility for disruption at Yale — where the white radicals were weak, divided or coopted by the general progressivism of the institution — would come if the internal Blacks ever linked their situation to that of the New Haven Blacks, who had a number of grievances against Yale. New Haven, thirty percent Black, mostly Black in large areas contiguous to Yale, with a high level of Black consciousness and leadership, was, like the marble courthouse where the Panthers would stand trial, an irreducible fact of our situation.

Kenneth Mills was going off to talk with the Black students, who were disciplined, statesmanlike, but under tremendous pressures. A word about Mills: without him, events never would have been patterned as they were. Not that he had a "scenario" to start with; he improvised brilliantly as he went on. Born in Trinidad, educated at Oxford, a student of Marxism and Third World revolutions, someone who could gain the trust of the Panthers yet also hold the respect of his white colleagues, it was he who would make all the connections and articulate them in the days to come.

Monday evening, April 20, 9 P.M. There was a meeting of the Student Senate (the latest in a series of attempts to set up a viable representative student body) to judge what should be done. Doug Miranda had called for a strike the day before, arguing that the "Panther and the Bulldog gotta get together." A mass meeting in Ingalls Hockey Rink was scheduled for the following day.

The Senate meeting was open. There were about sixty senators and perhaps a hundred other students and a handful of faculty present. The senators were taking their task seriously. They in no way resembled the student government types of my day; they weren't square. The chairman seemed admirably versed in procedural mat-

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ters and was pretty well in control of the situation for a while. But heckling from the back of the room, from a group of Blacks and mostly from a group of white radicals, was becoming more intense. The motion to recommend a strike was passed, 33:26, after much procedural wrangling, but the vote almost seemed irrelevant in the face of the attack on proceduralism iself, coming from the hecklers. I remember the tense, angry face of one Black girl screaming at the chairman, "*You're* out of order," then simply, "Bullshit, bullshit," as she moved toward the door. Then a Black student came down to the front of the room and went up on the platform and told the senators that they were pathetic, that he had never seen anything so pathetic in his life. He went on to announce that the Blacks were holding a press conference at 10 A.M. the next morning at which they would call for a strike, and would introduce a little reality into the university, instead of all this procedural bullshit. The senators *were* pathetic. They ended by voting themselves out of existence. Their pathos came from trying to use classic parliamentary forms in a situation that would not admit of such forms. The gap between the "real country" and the "legal country" had grown too great; the latter no longer had any purchase on the former. One could let one's imagination free on a melodramatic flight to think of *Dix-huit Brumaire* or the Reichstag fire or any of the other collapses of proceduralism in the face of force.

Even without sacrificing to the melodramatic, I left the meeting depressed, because it was one more example that we didn't possess the forms for dealing with what we were facing and would have to forge them anew. That was perhaps one definition of a revolutionary situation. But there was no certainty of what new forms would suffice. Whose would they be? Within the limits of preparation for May Day, the students would create these forms, in the colleges, in the perpetual participative forum they established, in the grant of authority to ad hoc working groups. And the administration — most pertinently, the college masters and the president — would ratify these forms and let them exercise power. That is where the immediate source of strength would come from.

When the Black students and faculty called for a strike, it did in fact transform everything. Because what the strike now became was a kind of minimum psychic demand on the rest of Yale to

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prove that they were listening and that they were committed to having Blacks at Yale to the point that they would understand what kind of a position the Blacks had been put in as a result of pressures from the Panthers and from their place within the elitist institution. Their demands were militant but not irresponsible; they were moving in that they showed a commitment to the institution as well as to blackness, a heroic effort to balance militancy and the preservation of Yale. I sat down on Tuesday and wrote out some sentences about where I thought we were. The statement was for my classes, but also for myself: an attempt to explain to myself why I felt there had been a raising to a new level in the dialectic. "The issue is no longer specifically and exclusively the trial of the New Haven Panthers," I wrote, "and the commitment to justice in that trial that we all must affirm and seek to realize. A new symbolism has been introduced: that of the national repression of the Black Panther Party; that of Yale's relation to the Black community bordering on it; that of racism in our nation and our lives. It is useless to protest that this new symbolism is not necessarily linked to a criminal trial going on in New Haven. It is linked to it at the deepest level of reality. . . . The innocence or guilt of the defendants [in that trial] has nothing to do with the real trial, which is of ourselves, as individuals and as an institution."

I had come to believe that the strike was necessary, but also that it had to be put to good use.

That night was the Ingalls Rink meeting. The phenomenology of the meeting was special and curious for Yale. Its model was the mass meetings on ROTC and university governance that had been held in the rink a year previously. The fact of the rink, Saarinen's great arching space, was itself part of the phenomenology: as the largest structure at Yale, it meant extraordinary numbers, urgency, the inadequacy of the usual forms. The meetings in the spring of 1969 had been laboriously democratic, with microphones placed on the floor, student and faculty speeches from all quarters, a parliamentarian on hand and carefully counted votes. I think we all expected the same thing at Ingalls this time. We thought we were being assembled to vote on the strike proposition. Your first perception that things were different was the layout: behind the speakers' platform, in the bleachers, all the Blacks had taken their seats together, so that

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what you saw, looking at the platform, was a solid phalanx subtending it. The platform was itself in the hands of the Blacks exclusively. It was evidently to be a rally rather than a debate. Some of my colleagues would later compare it to Nuremberg; that was nonsense, but the theatrical effect was tremendous.

Just before the meeting, I learned that David Hilliard and Emory Douglas had been freed that day, their sentences reduced to "time served." They had been brought into court, where they apologized to the judge, and Bobby Seale said that he hoped for a fair trial. How much was this the result of Yale pressure? There had been maneuvers behind the scenes. The students read it, more simply, and in the larger analysis perhaps not entirely inaccurately, as the result of their massive demonstration of concern: the dismissal confirmed them both in their analysis of Yale's power to influence decisions in the New Haven judiciary and in their sense of their own power.

The liberation of Hilliard and Douglas started the meeting on a note of détente. We were moving forward. The whites who spoke seemed uncomfortable; they were there on tolerance only. Bill Coffin's proposal for bearing witness against the trial by submitting to arrest in front of the courthouse — an arrest prearranged with Police Chief Ahern — struck no fire: here was another form that no longer seemed to have any validity in the situation, a form left over from freedom marches and the heroic days of the antiwar movement, now bypassed by history. It was after Coffin's speech that the chairman intoned, "The platform is back in the hands of the people." Again you asked yourself, whose revolution?

I don't think any of us knew that David Hilliard was coming to the rally. He was introduced by Charles Garry, preceded up the ramp into the rink by four bodyguards of a kind of outrageous theatricality — they looked, I thought, like what Jean Genet would think Panther bodyguards ought to look like — and the arrival had stunning effect. He stood, elegant and dynamic, a twenty-six-year-old Black revolutionary leader just freed from jail, to the wild ovation of the students. What ensued — his mention that it was all right to kill pigs, followed by the students' boos, his loss of cool and vituperation of the "long-haired hippie Yale motherfuckers," his final retraction in exchange for the crowd's retracting its boos, then the strange appearance of the white student who thrust himself forward to the microphone and was grabbed and beaten by Hilliard's bodyguards;

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all this may ultimately have had a good effect. It was nasty, but it showed the students some of the forces they were attempting to deal with. There had been and would be a great deal of talk about "reality" as something that lay outside the university's walls and demanded discovery. This was an element of the reality, an element that included the charm and style of David Hilliard, his extreme vulnerability, the paranoia of the Panthers and the instinctive reaction of violence, the desperately difficult position of someone like Ken Mills, understanding the Panther reaction and the white reaction and trying to give them both a place. It was sobering. And it may have had in the days to come some effect in warding off white radical "adventurism."

It was after the Ingalls Rink meeting that the students went back to their colleges and held strike votes. The next day, new formulations of the strike demands were worked out. From the innumerable teach-ins was born a teach-out, and students had their hair cut to canvass New Haven neighborhoods. The Strike Steering Committee was born, and by April 26 it had given the demands their final formulation in the "Five Demands." Beyond the issue of the "injustice" of the trial, they included parent-controlled day-care centers for Yale employees; unemployment compensation for Yale workers; community housing built by Yale and regulation of Yale expansion by a community-university board; a halt to the new Social Sciences Institute, which looked like a technocratic and manipulative project. The five demands grafted white radical concerns onto the Black issues, but with a clear subordination of the former to the latter. And the traditional SDS concerns — ROTC, the student-worker alliance — were not represented. SDS would remain almost totally out of the picture; when it tried to dramatize its existence later on, it managed only to look ludicrous. The tense weeks at Yale would see no building occupations, no busts, none of the classic claptrap of radicalization. The situation was too serious for that, and "raising the level of consciousness" had no need for it.

"You know what this is? It's a goddamn Munich. That's what it is." Thus one of my colleagues on his way out of the April 23 faculty meeting. This, if melodramatic, was true enough, yet totally inadequate.

That the faculty was "coerced" seems plain. It had the week

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before refused to vote anything at all in connection with the trial, and it was expectable that the banner of "institutional neutrality" would prevent anything but the mildest statement of concern. Recognition of the strike could, it seemed, probably come only in the form of agreement not to penalize students for it. It was known that there would be some resolutions censuring it. So when a left-liberal group planned a resolution calling attention to the urgency of the issues raised by the trial and recommending that a week be devoted to analysis and proposals for action — with suspension of classes or not, as individuals saw fit — we thought it would be too "radical" to pass. We hadn't known there would be a Black faculty resolution. This was more militant, and was presented as nonnegotiable. It stipulated that "normal functions" be "suspended" without time limit, and included a *quid pro quo* with the New Haven community on land taking, a fund to support the defendants and other points. President Brewster, after his famous "skepticism" statement — a moving and humane statement which assured him a position of moral leadership in the following week — suggested change of "normal functions . . . be suspended" to "normal expectations . . . be modified." The Black faculty accepted the change and also the addition of the nonviolence, noncoercion clause from our resolution. Our move for a time limit to the strike was not acceptable to the Blacks and was voted down. Then the Black faculty resolution was passed overwhelmingly.

I was pleased that the faculty had acted, that it had corporately made a firm commitment of concern, that it had responded to the students and showed that it understood the situation. But I was perplexed and bothered because I didn't really feel that it *had* understood — at least, not all of those who had voted for the resolution. The right, which had been extremely vocal in some seven hours of meeting following a minor building occupation in the fall, had been almost totally silent. So, indeed, had most of the center, generally in control. Evidently, everyone had been engaged in a new and uncharted contest, a contest which no one could handle within the parliamentary forms. The "reality" of the meeting — the reality of the Black faculty's nonnegotiable position and the coerced position they were in by their dual identity as Blacks and as Yale professors — was simply not subject to the usual processes of parliamentary debate and compromise. The situation in the room was really determined

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by forces on which the faculty had no hold. I left the meeting fearing the backlash from those who had voted, or remained silent, through psychological duress. I myself felt the duress. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized that here, too, an *Aufhebung* was necessary. To charge coercion was superficial, since the coercion was part of the Blacks' existential condition — and hence of our own. If our forms couldn't handle this reality, we'd have to find new ones. But where?

ARMAGEDDON MINUS SEVEN

At times, it was a little like Flaubert's description of the days following the revolution of 1848, with its spawning of idiot utopian schemes and clubs. I heard students discussing day-care centers who might just as well have been talking about the processing of hotdogs for all they knew about children and their needs. I heard a good deal about the liberation of Yale and how the old academic bullshit was gone. But mostly it was sober and concerned, with a sense of strength and unity emerging from the meetings in the colleges. I began to feel that planning for May Day — housing, feeding, first aid, marshaling — was absorbing too much attention and was diverting people from the real issues. The Armageddon image had given the issues their intensity, but now it threatened to make them irrelevant compared to the fact of 30,000 expected May Day demonstrators and all that seemed to entail. But I was wrong to consider preparation for May Day a diversion, because it was probably the most concrete education in the forms of the new that Yale could have. Starting from what was perhaps the single most significant decision of those weeks — to have the privileged, elitist university open to the demonstrators, and to all the forces assembling in New Haven on May Day, rather than a locked bastion — it became an exercise in the elaboration of new processes of responsibility, decision making and fraternity. It was almost like Cohn-Bendit's "glimpse of a possibility."

A colleague said to me both mockingly and admiringly: "Yalies really are different from other people. You come to understand the 'thousand leaders' bit." The managerial instinct had come into the open and begun to shape the situation. I experienced it most on the Monitoring Committee, which Bill Coffin organized on Monday, April 27. The students had pads of yellow paper and they made

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lists of what had to be done, of whom to see; they had the deadlines of all the major college dailies and knew how to write a press release. They were in touch with congressmen and senators; they could talk with both Ann Froines of Panther Defense and Police Chief Ahern. They were quietly omnicompetent, and they made me think that my generation's assumption, at that age, of silence and the intractability of social reality was a form of psychic damage suffered somewhere during the Eisenhower years or earlier, with the start of cold war.

There was a good atmosphere at Coffin's house, the sense of a control center where you had more contact with the reality of the situation than anywhere else. But you also felt the limits of this competence as the rumors, some verified, some simply persistent, came in. Students from Cambridge who had heard people saying they were going to New Haven "to get their first pig." Reports from several campuses that the shock troops — November Action Committee, Weathermen, Youth Against War and Facism — would be present in force. Arms stolen from a truck in East Haven, presumably to arm some white vigilante group. Mysterious fires set in the Law School. At least one assassination threat to a faculty member. And then the news that the National Guard would probably be deployed around the Green, where the rally was to take place, and that 4000 federal paratroops would be standing by in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. A member of our committee saw five tanks rumbling down the streets of Branford, just outside New Haven. There was at least the conceivable possibility that we were heading toward a first act in a great American showdown.

The student body ranged between intense activity — the best therapy — and real fear. Like most faculty members, I continued to meet my classes that week, to find out what the few students who came were thinking, what they wanted to talk about, how they thought we should finish out the academic year if we got through the weekend. They were mainly the nonactivists, but not unconcerned. Sometimes we talked about literature, with a kind of intensity brought by the alienation effect. A few students asked if they should leave for the weekend. Since they had come to that point in their thinking, I always said yes. The lambs to slaughter image was hard to avoid: they looked so young, and it seemed that they were being asked to bear, directly and concretely, the burden of all the wrongs and vicious stupidities of American society and policy.

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Violence: what did that mean in the context being created for New Haven May 1 — some gassing, a little Macing, some clubbed heads or a shootout? A fragment of our nightmare was realized May 3, in Kent, Ohio. The Guard in New Haven, too, had live ammunition in their rifles.

I was made aware of the evolution from nonviolence within the Movement in Washington on November 15. The dense crowd in which I was at the foot of the slope up to the Washington Monument was invaded by a wedge of club-carrying, helmeted, short-haired and totally antipathetic young, who reminded one more of the hoods of yesteryear than the Woodstock Generation. They weren't much interested in peaceniks like Pete Seeger; they chanted "Free Bobby Seale" at every opportunity and donned their battle gear when David Dellinger announced the evening rally at the Justice Department. Even among those whose commitment to nonviolence had previously seemed an ultimate tenet of faith, there was evidence of wavering toward a new position, which more or less stated that to talk of nonviolence didn't make sense: since violence was exercised upon them, was ingrained in American society, they could not be held responsible for their violent response. I had heard the same argument in France in 1968, but it was more frightening here since the context of violence was so much more real. I am not at all sure what the first "orders" for the May Day demonstration were. I suspect they have been of an anything goes nature. Certainly the word was abroad at other campuses that this was to be the biggest riot of all time. At first, the white radicals of Panther Defense did not seem to want to make any specific commitment to nonviolence. But by the time of May Day minus two or three, things looked slightly better. New Haven Black community organizations had denounced white radical exploitation of their grievances, and had organized to keep high school students away from the demonstration and to police their neighborhoods. The chairman of the Strike Steering Committee, Bill Farley, had made a strong statement against "provocateurs" in his news conference. Representatives of the Monitoring Committee returned from a meeting with Ann Froines convinced that Panther Defense wanted a peaceful demonstration, though they found serious deficiencies in the organization of the rally. Most of all: a clear signal had come from the New Haven Panthers that the cause would not be served by violence. Big Man was very clear and forceful on the

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subject in his press conference; and when the weekend arrived, the Panthers put on a stunning display of leadership and responsibility. They would be helped by the marshals, and by the restraint of the police; even the Guard, though a sinister and provocative presence, behaved well. But how long could we ask the Panthers to behave more responsibly than those who were out to suppress them? The arrest of the Baltimore Panthers came on the eve of May Day.

Thursday evening, April 30, at Bill Coffin's watching Nixon's deviously sincere gray face, hearing that America must not be a pitiful helpless giant, you got a feeling of numbness. You could hardly register the horror of the Cambodian invasion. From within the closed sphere of anxiety that had gradually enveloped us, this seemed, grotesquely, just one more uncontrollable force launched against New Haven on May Day, a kind of explicit provocation to force the Movement into armed showdown.

MAY DAY

The college masters had organized a faculty "presence" in most of the colleges, to lend a stabilizing effect. Some had moved into the guest suites for the weekend; some, like myself, were just hanging around in the courtyard. The soup kitchen had been set up, to serve Familia, brown rice, salad and something like Kool-Aid, but slightly worse. Someone had found a cache of Civil Defense "survival crackers" in huge tins, stored in the basement for the day of thermonuclear war, and brought them up. They were inedible. It was sunny and warm and very pleasant in the courtyard as we waited, with somewhat self-conscious calm, for four o'clock and the start of the rally. Outside, all the downtown shops were boarded up with bright new sheets of plywood, a raw and expensive tribute to panic which the students were as rapidly as possible covering with posters and stenciled slogans. If you walked ablock from the college, you suddenly came into the midst of the Guard, slouched in their jeeps, with rifle barrels sticking in every direction. They did look obscene. Someone could tell them to put their guns on the floor, I thought. There was a long line of them in front of the Grove Street Cemetery. The neo-Egyptian gate above them was inscribed: THE DEAD SHALL BE RAISED.

I wandered forth onto the Green. Most of the speeches that first

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day were utterly boring. Jean Genet's preposterous inanities, which Big Man struggled through in translation, reminded me of the hopeless superficiality of most French analyses of American society. But they also brought home just how impossible it was to articulate to the outside world what was going on. The rhetoric was occasionally violent, but no one was knocking Yale in particular, which was encouraging. The best thing was just looking at the crowd, which was the greatest assemblage of the counterculture I had seen. It was essentially different from a Moratorium or a Mobe crowd. It was war-painted, half-denuded, Vietcong-flagged. Jerry Rubin in his Captain Marvel outfit, the marijuana-sprigged Yippie flag fluttering in all quarters, the YAWF shock troops in formation with small yellow and black Bobby Seale pennants. There were many Blacks, most of them young and elegant. Despite the dire warnings of violence, they had come, and the center of New Haven was liberated territory that day. It wasn't the Woodstock Nation, it was something more alienated and more volatile, more forceful too. Any country that had brought together so many people so totally in opposition to its consensus, I thought, could not forever escape a reckoning.

I went back to the college and listened to Abbie Hoffman on a transistor radio with the gate marshals. The rally ended early, and quiet, orderly young people began drifting in the gate and lining up for the Familia and brown rice.

That evening, I left the college and walked up along the Green toward the Old Campus, where there was a rock concert. Across on the other side of the Green, I could see a shadowy column advancing. They were police in new riot gear. Light glanced off their plastic helmets. When I reached the gate of the Old Campus, the marshals, harassed and in too small number, were working desperately to get the milling crowds back through the high and narrow gate into the campus. "The police say we have to clear the streets," one of them explained. The first confrontation — a minor one, as they all would be — was about to take place, because, I later learned, a provocateur had gone from college to college announcing that some Panthers had been arrested on the Green, calling forth demonstrators. When I got into the Old Campus, the rock music stopped and a young Black man stepped to the microphone. It was Doug Miranda, nineteen-year-old Panther captain, who proceeded to give an extraor-

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dinary and moving speech. He called the crowd every name in the Panther repertory. He told the motherfuckers to get in off the street and onto the campus, to get their heads together and to get off their ego trips. Because, he said, they weren't ready for the revolution yet. They needed to learn discipline, they had to follow the lead of their revolutionary avant-garde. "Because, you see, if niggers can have discipline, then so can you," he said. You need to come and rap together, you need your workshops, you need to study and to learn. Yale was open, they should come in and use it. The speech ended in praise of the university as the base for the revolutionary transformation of society. In this speech everything that the crisis was about was beautifully articulated: a nineteen-year-old Black standing in Yale's Old Campus across from the statues of Abraham Pierson and Nathan Hale, explaining that the revolution needed the university and that the university was in the revolution. What, I thought, can you say about a system that has put someone so smart, so warm, such a clear leader of men, into the streets rather than into the classrooms in the buildings surrounding him. If we can't take the challenge he embodies, and bring it — and him — into the classrooms, we will fail and will deserve to fail.

I walked on to Saybrook College, where in the narrow courtyard everyone was sitting in deep calm. Allen Ginsberg was behind a raised balustrade, chanting poems. Someone came and gave him a message, and he announced quietly that there was gas on the Green, drifting up over the young green trees. He was a saintlike figure, and the crowd felt it. He went moments later to the Old Campus and sat crosslegged on the bandstand to sing melodic oms as the gas drifted in, penetrated everywhere. Students held wet towels on his eyes, the water rolled down his face and the oms went on.

The next day, we all were looser. We had got through the first round. We milled around on the Old Campus, where a group of students was preparing to go "Rap with the Guard." I went for a while into Dwight Hall Chapel, where a packed house was voting to go back to their universities and shut them down in protest over Panther repression and the Cambodian invasion. In Branford College, there had been a group of YAWF militants who were protesting that they hadn't come to New Haven for a rock festival, but to free Bobby, and that they wanted some action. The Monitoring Committee called Panther headquarters, and a group of Panthers came

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to talk with them and persuade them to calm. By four o'clock, with the weather magnificent, it was like going down to the Green for a picnic. There was too much talk, as usual, with statements from Women's Lib and the Gay Liberation Front. Jerry Rubin was endless and shrill. I thought he had none of Abbie Hoffman's depth of humor and warmth. He said that white middle-class youth was the most oppressed group in America, that the conspiracy's true crime was being child molesters. That was funny, but it didn't take you very far. Then there was Ken Mills, relentlessly articulate and intelligent as ever, telling the crowd to go back to their universities and make them strike. "Shut them down, open them up to reality." I found the phrase offensive. What is closer to reality in America, 1970, than the open university? Finally there was Tom Hayden with a long, thoughtful speech in which he compared Kingman Brewster to Sihanouk: the liberal advocate of an intelligent, active neutralism, providing a sanctuary to radicals. But you saw what happened to Sihanouk. How long would it be possible to play the Brewster role without a coup from the right? It was like the fair-trial hangup: you had to raise yourself to the consciousness that the "facts" of the trial were irrelevant, and take sides. Hayden ended by saying that this was the last speech he was going to make, that he was going to organize. The implication was that he was going underground.

It was the right speech to end with, because most of us on the left at Yale were still close to a Sihanouk position, our radicalism tempered by liberalism and democratic proceduralism. The claims of any other position seem dubious and dangerous, but polarization is proceeding fast. I got some idea of how fast when I went, along with a Yale senior, Geoffrey Davis, to speak to a group of upper–middle-class–to–power-elite suburbanites a week later. We were trying to explain what was going on in the universities, to explain the new national strike and the meaning of its linkage of demands concerning Panther repression and the Indochina war. We were trying to make them see the connection between military adventurism in Asia and repression of the internal "colony," to show them how the Chicago trial, the New Haven trial, the shooting of Fred Hampton, Mitchell's preventive detention, the Cambodian invasion, all came together to force a consciousness of the crisis. Questions followed. One man asked if we really approved of the tactics of the Vietcong. Another wanted to know where our ideas came from. Another asked

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if we at Yale didn't feel personally responsible for the deaths at Kent State, since we had started all the agitation. When Geoff Davis answered that the responsibility lay with Nixon and Agnew for their attempts to polarize the country and dehumanize one part of it as "bums," we were hissed by a large part of the audience.

They were still living in the night of the cold war, and the Panthers were simply inconceivable to them. It became clear that our history and theirs were not the same. It wasn't just a question of age; I was as old as some of them and more than ten years older than Geoff. It was a question of worlds. I quoted to them the strait-jacketed priest Jacques Roux's lines near the end of *Marat/Sade:* "When will you learn to see/ When will you learn to take sides?" But I knew that if it was easy to take sides when confronted by them, in larger terms it was profoundly difficult to know what taking sides meant and how it could be accomplished. What was clear from Yale's spring was that the connection had been made and that a new and more difficult level of consciousness had been born in those who had tried to understand.

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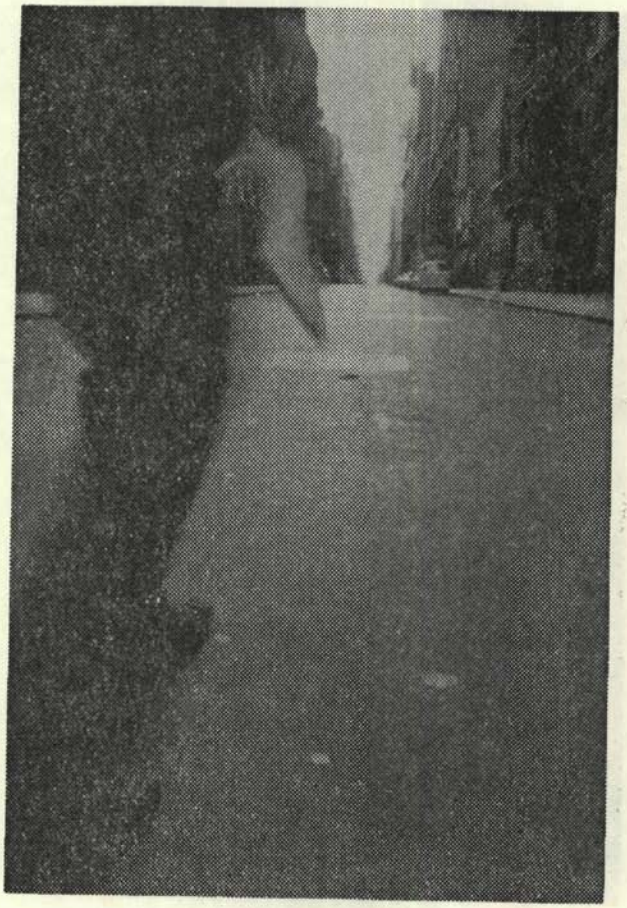

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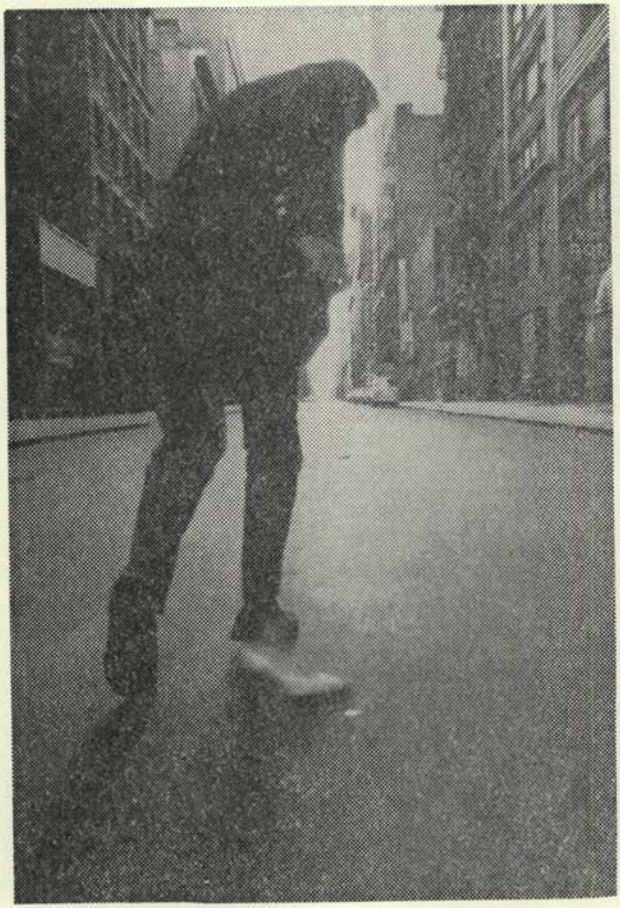

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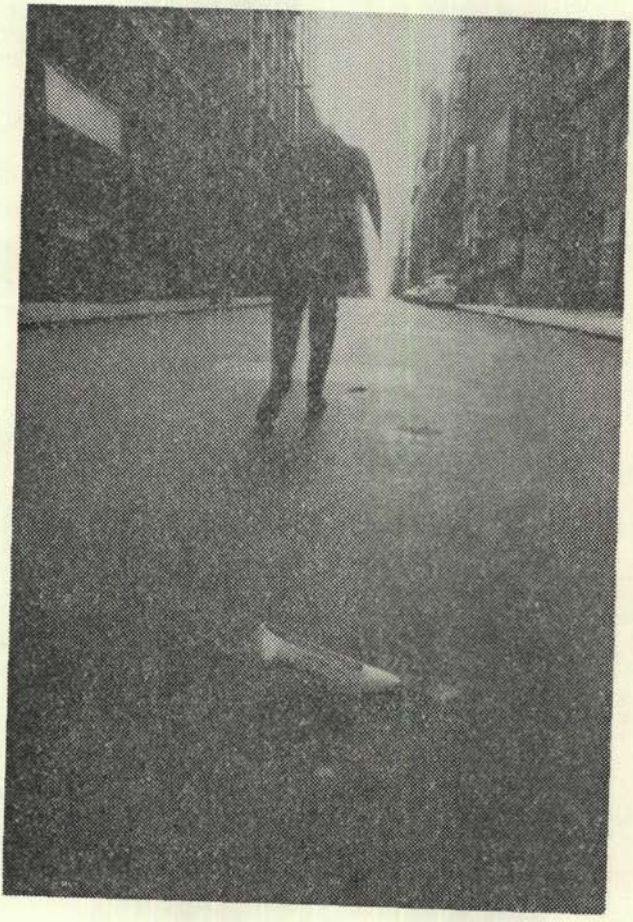

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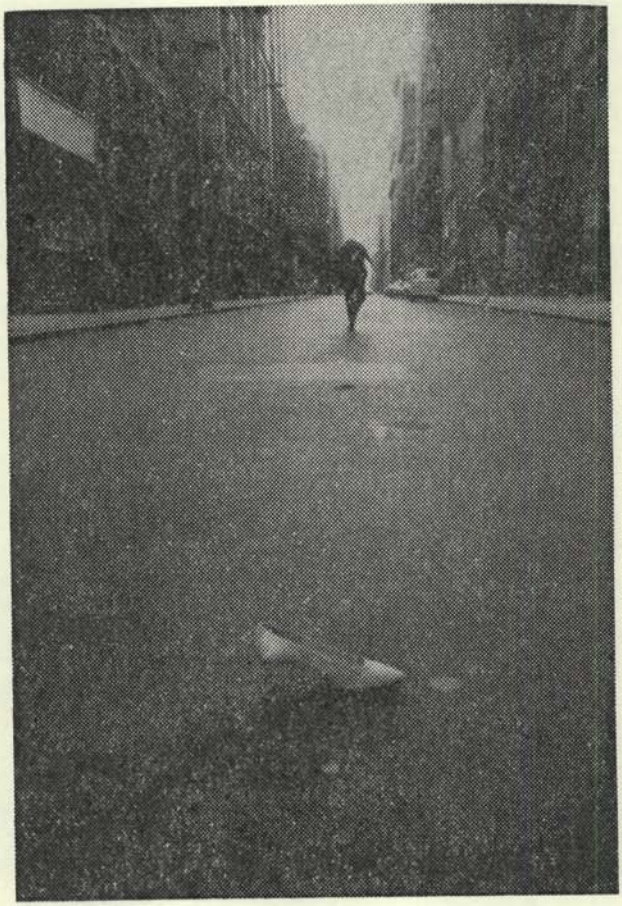

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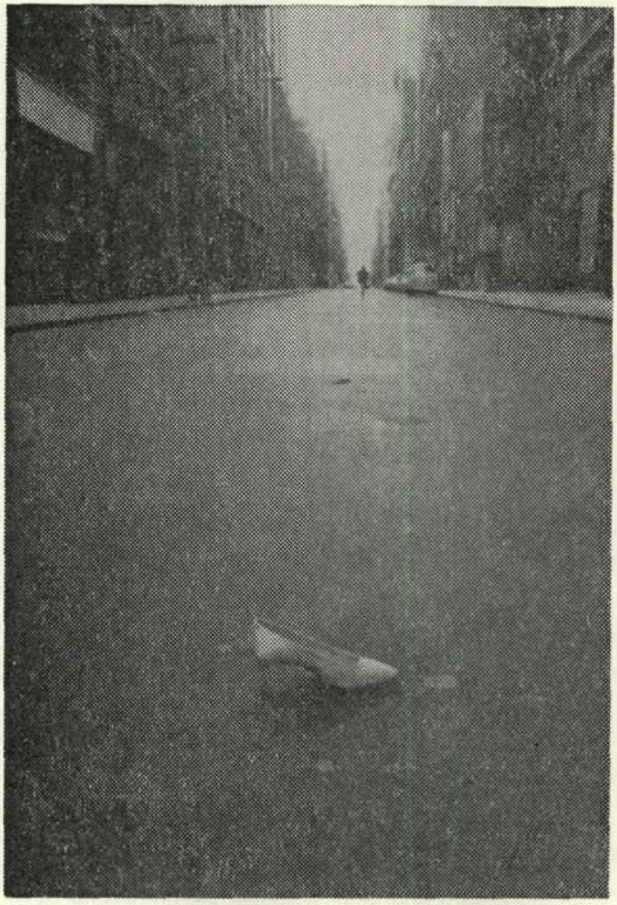

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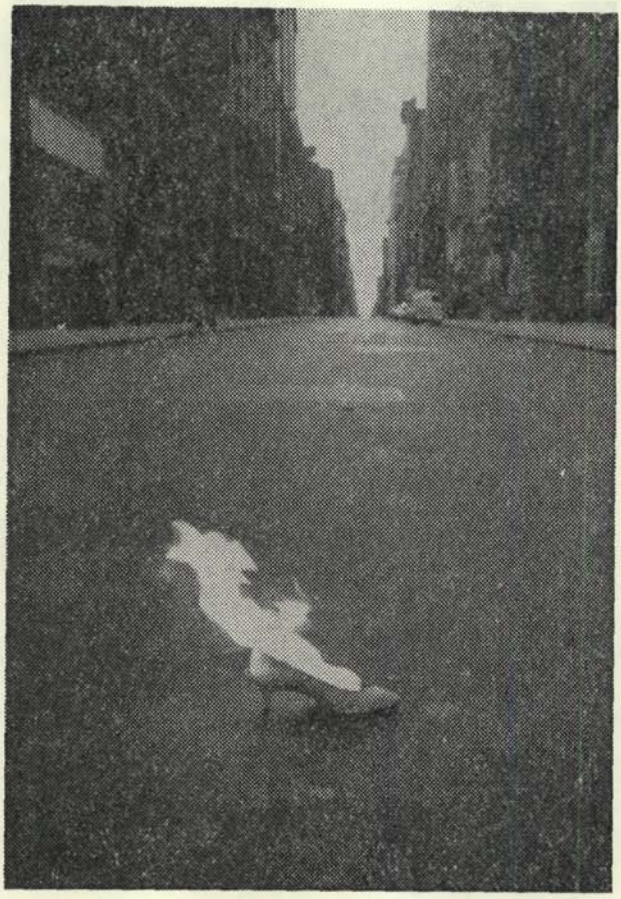

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REPORT FROM THREE FEET UNDER

I have always written to make myself happy. I put down the rocks and see to it that they lead somewhere, a tree, some quiet. So, I have trouble understanding why people might prefer an unenlightened group like the Stones to the Beatles. I say this because recently I had the misfortune to take an overdose of a drug. I swallowed, and twenty minutes later there I was.

Under the sea. Where I stood, deeply involved in the long irregular mountains, the day of glass, the stars, the pitchforks coming down on me like rain, a grayblue slanting rain that beat with an almost diarrhetic totally intestinal speed. It was this sensation of speed I found terrifying. Any faster and I'd then and there go mad — off to gravy and beyond. I could even so, I realized, still quicken it. By being stupid enough to laugh aloud, or hear someone beside me laugh. This laughter, when it came, appeared in ricocheting bursts like a machine gun, or a champagne christened ship. It rattled and knocked so it seemed a corpse's death rattle. Whereupon all doors would suddenly open and I'd be no more. A gash. A shutter knocking in the gray blue of a deserted house.

To keep alive I not only had to forbid all speech from anyone — speech in such circumstances easily turns to laughter — but I had also to excercise an entirely new patience. To see my bed on which I sat as the mere violently rolling ship it was. The world outside it was the world of noise, and this at all cost I had to avoid. I wanted to go to the bathroom but couldn't — for that sake alone. Not the flushing — that could be gotten round — but the sound, the waterfall roar of piss emitted. So no decamping. You don't get off a boat when it's in midocean. I let this thought buoy me up in these wastes where there was no food and I sat like a monk, cold, shivering, worried about the speed of the great white lunar plateau which I

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saw myself as inhabiting. The way was all around me: a fat glass; a moon. It had tacked on it an inhospitable NO ANCHOR HERE sign.

This was all I saw. The sea-bottom depth, the uninterestingness, the time between thoughts and their commonness, all depressed me. Rimbaud of the *Season in Hell* came to mind, first as someone I could emulate, then with compassion as I saw with what alacrity he must have given it up. "It's all in the mind," I told myself. Still I had only to close my eyes for the chains, the jangling terror, to reassert itself. The chains were the speed, dizzying, frenetic, at which the underwater angles of light moved, taking all before them, dissolving me to a song:

I'm a pig
I'm a gentle antelope
I'm a pig
I'm a gentle antelope
I'm a pig
I'm a gentle antelope

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At first the repetitions stabilized. But as they went on I felt inexorably caught in the schizophrenic glue of what I had created.

In my terror I took to being peremptory like a sultan in the Time of Evil. I was drowning and I was shivering; I needed a ballroom blaze of light; I was afraid to fall asleep because of the fantasies I'd uncover in that land, all alone and unprotected. The only real sultan is a child aged six, and this one, simplified to that, had eyes only for the stepmother in bed beside him, the drowning day, the wolves that were sure with nightfall to come under the dying embers of the covers. Hate and love, the need for space — a cool, glassy, lake blue space — struggled within me, while like an invalid I sought to rearrange the bed, find some position that would stay the crowding terrors, the creams, golds and shooting satins of David's Napoleon as it, too, conspired to invade the precinct.

I looked and the lamp was mine.

It was in the course of that night I understood how much talking was acting: the taking on of a role and playing it out to where by some invariable miracle the pose affected turned and touched some realer, more authentic me. This was not the truth come to, but rather a confirmation of the acting: that it wasn't shallow. I knew this because the moments of turning back and touching were not signs of a recurring, in-spite-of-everything grace so much as sheer applause; to be accompanied by a tilting of the head and a putting forth of the eyes, "Brilliant?" This yo-yo of conversation — actor and self — I was that night to become aware of. However beguiling the fountain play it was terribly expensive. There had to be simpler ways to proceed, to be me.

These were long hands and long minutes. I stayed with them as I had never stayed with anything in my life: a forest of silk where you glazed the dawn, a Tibetan manuscript might have worded it. Total concentration — absence of desire — charity. Spinning road, and at the gulf end whom I might be, if made clear to myself.

The trick for this new "I" would be to see all of my life as part of this one concurrent strand of time for which I was now the spokesman. Sometimes the speeding forest crossed a light; sometimes it went gray again, and a fox appeared, trotting evenly. To be honest would be to keep that speeding swirl always in view, to be that "me," the

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yellow-eyed, not so gifted owl of my own inmost terror. There were two roads in the world, and the one that went down also contained its share of wisdom, of self-knocking. At the bottom of the sea I could be the rock.

Still I had to wait. The more I looked up, tried to, the more I found myself looking down, immersed in one or another self–pitying pool.

Robin Magowan

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VARIETY

HANDBOOK FOR THE SEVENTIES

With the recent publication of *The Job*[1] Burroughs writes who do not listen. He advances against inhuman Ike who made radioactive image junk for greed, conspiring against the daily life of the masses — so the Authority habit and human smallness, whose methods were properly learned, became history with predatory intent. Can now be overthrown??

With treasonous documents Herr Doktor Kurt Unruh von Steinplatz tells how & his theories on Authority are formidable:

> For revolution to effect basic changes in existing conditions three tactics are required. 1. Disrupt. 2. Attack. 3. Disappear. Look away. Ignore. Forget. These three tactics to be employed *alternatively*.

Burroughs says it is necessary to travel which is good advice for bombers who throw real bombs. And for pie throwers too. Better still for hordes of young men armed with tape recorders under their jackets. They hurl insult commands from electronic tape and walk away.

O.K. If your habit is Authority it is necessary to travel. It is not to tattle. You must leave your language behind and perhaps even the tactics of the sixties. INVADE. DAMAGE. OCCUPY. keeps that habit with you which Burroughs noted in *The Soft Machine* regarding the Junk habit. Herr Doktor says:

> He who opposes force with counterforce alone forms that which he opposes and is formed by it. History shows that when a system of government is overthrown by force a system in many respects similar will take its place. On the other hand he who does not resist force that enslaves and exterminates will be enslaved and exterminated.

So morning gives tonight with no country & no allies show up on time. It is only natural for the police to attack you. Their indoctrination provides them with ample degraded reasons. The idea is not to be where they arrive. We have heard children of the Jews on their way to the ovens. What are we a rerun already? The movie industry

[1] THE JOB: Interviews with William S. Burroughs. By Daniel Odier. Grove Press. $5.95.

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comes cheap. We live now in the dirty stockings of Adolph. Remember Apollo 7? Didn't (Frank) Borman coo the gideon bible? So let's stop praying. According to Burroughs:

> To travel in space you must leave the old verbal garbage behind. God talk, country talk, mother talk, love talk, party talk. You must learn to exist with no religion no country no allies. You must learn to live alone in silence. Anyone who prays in space is not there.

It turns out that travel is knowledge and you can't breathe unless you know. That is the odor of precedence *à la carte*. You must know that life is with little exception determined by a system of control which has taken over the lives of ordinary men and women. As Burroughs has noted previously the system has sucked all the taste out of food the pleasure out of sex. If you can't live unless you are right you see what he means.

The four disciplines which prevail in *The Job* to keep ideas in motion are: anthropology, linguistics, orgonomics and dianetics.

The most interesting theories about the control system and the form it takes at present are inferred convincingly from a model of simultaneous calendars used by the Mayan priests to control the Mayan populace by remembering the past and foretelling the future. And it is all done with simple arithmetic. Reference to this model has been made in other parts of Burroughs's work. (See, for example, the chapter called "Who Am I to Be Critical?" in *The Soft Machine*.) Burroughs now clarifies this model in astonishing detail.

The most interesting circumstantial evidence in support of his theories is drawn from the daily press. They *write* events the way they want them to happen that is they are largely responsible for the dreary events they describe. Burroughs rewrites news, making you see what really happens between the lines of today & tomorrow. Hidden information surfaces to make oblique impropaganda talk: "Man time bombs rigged on 7 Hertz." Have heard those tactics to be employed? It was in all the papers. The Army has. I even read the following deflected information: that Gavreau's subsonic equipment (which shakes your internal organs to a lump of jelly) "could be used to core out worms from rotten apples." Are you farmers going to swallow them rigged apples??

The most interesting theme declares that the control system uses the mechanism of syllabic language with more success than virtually any other mechanism of control, including the great blackmail against the public of nuclear threat. According to what Burroughs says in *The Job*, if you eliminate the subvocal speech patterns which accompany talk in syllabic language, you decondition your every thought your every move, and you begin to eliminate the Authority which controls you.

The Job should convince you that this planet is a bureau of over-

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worked circumstance where events happen all around you on a schedule imposed from the outside. It describes how to wreck that bureau with precision. It is a guerrilla handbook for the seventies. It advances against electric come, keeping to lay off. It opposes with relevance. It is a crushed diary which says: OVERTHROW. Overthrow your self. Overthrow your eyes. Leave the wind to the Old Order. Put in for Revolution to effect basic changes. Leave the plexiglass them for another day in existing conditions. Like you say, *what is my ducksoup?*

In a dissimilar scream inhuman Ike rolled alternatively bad advice for bombers who threw a cigarette televised invasion during the sixties. On CBSABCNBC. Didn't you tune in? We saw them armed with tanks and cameras alternatively under the dead stars of Vietnam. Now throw back insult tapes! Betray & walk out! Joe Stalin's Dick Nixon's heavy camouflage alone forms that which it opposes. Namely you. Your G-habit in soft did you get it? From Ray Mar? Tina's machine accord?

The "in," who do not resist, force that enslaved intellectual Moe Thomas and exterminate. Have you been fooled? *It is only natural.* For the police, actuality overcame theory to attack you. That is their fix with the Senator whose idea is not to be where *you* arrive.

As Burroughs noted previously: PULL THE REVERSE SWITCH.

So now be thorough.

Jan Herman

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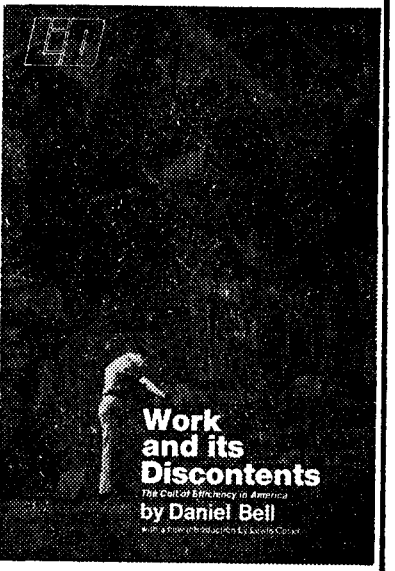

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CONTEMPORARY NONSENSE

DAR: EARTH DAY A SMOKESCREEN

WASHINGTON (AP) — While much of the nation joined in cleanup activities marking Earth Day, the Daughters of the American Revolution branded the environmental movement as "distorted and exaggerated."

"This environment movement is one of the subversive element's last steps," Mrs. Clarence Howard, a delegate from Missouri, said during debate. "They've gone after the military and the police and now they're going after our parks and playgrounds."
(*New York Post,* April 23, 1970.)

RIGHT-WING RALLY IN BOSTON

The Young Americans for Freedom declined an invitation from the Birch leaders to put up a Y.A.F. exhibit. The organization has exhibited at these rallies in the past.

Kent Courtney, national chairman of the Conservative Society of America and one of 61 exhibitors, contended the Y.A.F. boycott was inspired by William F. Buckley Jr., the author and syndicated columnist in whose Connecticut home Y.A.F. was founded a decade ago.

"Buckley has always disputed the theory, which all of us here believe, that there is a Communist conspiracy within our government," Mr. Courtney said in an interview.

"All Y.A.F. chapters follow his lead. He dictated this boycott. When one conservative calls another a racist, there's a nigger in the woodpile and he was it."
(*The New York Times,* July 6, 1970.) Contributed by Joseph Pequigney, Stony Brook, New York.

MOOD OF THE COUNTRY

White House sources said the briefing teams also took soundings on the mood of the country. "We can tell quite a bit from the lines of questioning," said one official. "We had a resident hippie in one city give us some insights into the youth movement."
(*The New York Times,* August 23, 1970.) Contributed by Gene Chavkin, Jamaica, New York.

Editors' Note: *We'd like to remind our readers that they are invited to send in examples of nonsense. A free subscription to* PR *will be awarded for each contribution used. In case of a tie, single copies will be sent to the late comers.*

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KISSINGER DECLARES ABM KEY TO GAINS AT VIENNA PARLEY

WASHINGTON, JULY 23 — Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's adviser on national security, told a Congressional group today that the United States must proceed with deployment of a missile defense system to insure progress in negotiations with the Soviet Union on the control of strategic arms.
(*The New York Times,* July 24, 1970.)

HARRIMAN ON VIETNAM

The retired diplomat said he believes an agreement could be reached with Hanoi.

He called North Vietnam "fiercely nationalistic. They realize, as Tito did, that they have to have relations with the West. They're fascinated, for instance, with miracle rice."
(*New York Post,* July 9, 1970.) Contributed by Seymour Britchtky, New York, New York.

NEW YORK POLICE RECRUITS AVERAGE 98.20 IN I.Q. TESTS, LOWEST IN YEARS

The average I.Q. scores of recruits entering the Police Department here in 1969 were the lowest recorded in recent years, according to a study financed by the Justice Department.

The average score of the 2,075 men brought into the department in four classes last year was 98.20, with one class of 358 men averaging 93.19.

Some police departments, such as the one in Los Angeles, say they will not take men with I.Q.'s under 110, according to Dr. Nelson A. Watson, director of the professional standards division of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

"I personally think this is a bit high," Dr. Watson said. "But when you start getting men scoring less than 90—and with an average of 93 you begin to wonder."
(*The New York Times,* July 23, 1970.)

HEADLINERS

NIXON WOULD ACT IF IDLENESS ROSE
(*The New York Times,* February 24, 1970.)

POOR PEOPLE ARE POOR, ANTIPOVERTY CHIEF SAYS
(*The New York Times,* February 24, 1970.)

Contributed by William Mather Boardman, New York, N.Y.

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NOTES

(*Continued from Page 336*)

The Miner's Pale Children, published by Atheneum this fall. He also has a book of poetry out, **The Carrier of Ladders.** . . . A frequent contributor to **PR, PETER BROOKS** teaches French at Yale and is acting master of Pierson College there this year. . . . **"The Lost Shoe"** is from **DUANE MICHALS's** book, **Sequences,** published by Doubleday. An exhibit of Mr. Michals's opened at the MOMA on October 7. His work is also on permanent exhibition at The Chicago Art Institute and U.C.L.A. . . . ROBIN MAGOWAN teaches English at Berkeley. He has a book of poetry out, **Voyages.** . . . **JAN HERMAN** is editor of **The San Francisco Earthquake** and of Nova Broadcast Press.

We're not running reviews in this issue, for lack of space. We'll have reviews next time.

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